
SINTRAM
AND HIS COMPANIONS

SINTRAM

AND HIS COMPANIONS

PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT CO. 1901

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In Drontheim's high castle sat many Norseland knights together in company. Council had they been holding over the kingdom's welfare, and now they were carousing merrily around the giant stone-table in the resounding vaulted hall.

The rising storm drove a wild snow flurry against the clattering windows; all the doors shook in their oaken joints, and the heavy locks rattled violently. The castle clock, with a slow jarring din of many wheels, struck one; and there flew into the hall, with terrified shrieks, his hair streaming and his eyes shut, a boy pale as death; and standing behind the carved seat of the mighty knight Biorn, he clasped the hero in shining mail with both hands, and cried in piercing tone—

"Father and knight! Knight and father! Death and Another are coming after me, terrifying me again!"

A dreadful stillness lay upon the whole assembly; only that the boy over and over again gave the same terrified cry.

Then an old warrior out of knight Biorn's numberless followers, whom they called the pious Rolf, strode towards the now sobbing child, clasped him in his arms, and prayed—half singing—

"Help, Father mine,
This servant Thine!
I believe, and I cannot believe!"

At once the boy let go his hold of the great Biorn as in a dream, and the pious Rolf bore him, easily as a feather, though with tears in his eyes, out of the hall; always with a murmur of singing.

The lords and knights looked at each other in amazement. But Biorn lifted up his voice, and with wild and grim laughter began—

"Do not let the strange affair of this boy mislead you! He is my only son, and has been like this from his fifth year. Now he is twelve, and although at first I was made anxious I am by this time well accustomed to it. But it comes only once a year, always at this time. Now grant me your grace

that I have spent so many words over my silly Sintram, and let us have something more worth while."

There was still silence for a time; then a few voices began lightly and uncertainly to take up some broken-off discourse, nevertheless without success. A few of the youngest and most jovial began a roundelay; but the storm so strangely howled and whistled and whispered that before long this also was silenced.

So that now they sat speechless and almost motionless in the great hall. The lamp flared drearily in the high vault; the whole assembly of heroes were as pallid lifeless shapes clad in gigantic armour.

Then the chaplain of the Castle of Drontheim, the only spiritual man in the knightly circle, arose and said: "Dear lord Biorn, in a wonderful way, and doubtless by a special decree of God, have the eyes of all of us been turned upon you and your son. You see that we cannot turn our thoughts aside, and you could do no better than tell us what you know of the boy's strange behaviour. Perhaps indeed the serious tale which I foresee may be good for this somewhat wild company."

Knight Biorn looked at the chaplain with displeased glance, and answered: "My lord chaplain, you yourself have more part in the story than

either you or I could wish. Let us spare our jovial Norseland warriors that miserable tale."

But the chaplain, with firm and yet most gentle mien, came nearer to the knight, saying—

"Dear lord, hitherto has the telling or the not telling rested solely with you; now, since you so strangely advert to me and to my part in the misfortune of your son, I must positively command you that you relate word for word everything exactly as it happened. My honour demands it, —and that you feel no less clearly than I do."

Sternly, but submissively, the knight Biorn bowed his proud head and began the following tale:—

"It is now seven years ago, and when I was keeping with my assembled followers the Christmas festival. There are some old and honourable customs of our great ancestors which have come down to us; one, that of having a gilded boar's head brought upon the table, over which all kinds of vows may be made, whether heroic or merry. Our chaplain here, who used often to visit us, was no friend to such reminders of the mighty Hero world. Such men as he had but slight respect in those ancient times."

"My worthy forerunners," the chaplain interrupted, "held far more by God than by the world, and with God were they had in much favour. Thus they converted your forefathers, and if I can

in any such fashion be helpful to you I shall not take your mockery to heart."

With still darker look, but afraid to show his anger, the knight went on—

"Yes, yes! Promises of an unseen world, and threatenings from it! So that one shall the more easily be made to part with all that one sees and has of good! Years ago, alas, years ago indeed had I such good! How strange it is! Sometimes it now seems to me as if all that were centuries ago, and I now were in loneliest old age, so terribly different is everything now. Yet I call to mind that the most of you my noble table-guests have seen me in my happiness, and have known my Verena,—my wife, in her heavenly beauty."

He buried his face in his hands, and it was as though he wept. The storm had passed; soft moonlight streamed through the window and fell as if comforting and caressing upon Biorn's savage figure.

Then suddenly he rose up with a wild clanking of armour, and cried with thundering voice, "Am I to turn into a monk as she has become a nun? No, crafty chaplain! For flies of my sort are your webs too thin!"

"I know nothing of webs," said the priest. "Openly, faithfully, have I now for six years set heaven and hell before you; and you consented to

the step which the holy Verena has taken. But what all this has to do with the suffering of your son I know not,—and wait for your story."

"Then long may you wait!" laughed Biorn furiously. "Rather shall"—

"Curse not!" cried the chaplain in a commanding voice, and with flashing eyes.

"Hurrah!" screamed Biorn in wild terror, "Hurrah! Death and his fellows are loose!" And in raving fright he flew from the hall and down the steps; and outside one could hear the wild horn-blasts calling his men together, and soon thereafter their dashing out over the stark icy courtyard.

The knights went forth silently, almost trembling; the chaplain sat alone at the great stone table in prayer.

SHORT time after, the pious Rolf came slowly and noiselessly back, and stood astonished at the deserted hall. In the far-removed chamber where he had again lulled the child to sleep he had heard nothing of the wild outbreak of the knights. The kindly chaplain told him of all that had passed, and said—

"But, dear Rolf, I should like much to ask about the strange words that were used by you to pacify the distressed Sintram. They sounded of holy meaning; and they must have been, and yet I did not understand—

"'I believe, and I cannot believe!'"

"Reverend sir," Rolf answered, "from my earliest childhood I remember that not one of the stories

of the gospel so powerfully wrought upon me as that wherein the disciple was not able to heal the boy possessed of devils, and the transfigured Redeemer Himself came down from the mountain and burst the bonds that the Evil Spirit had fastened upon him. It always seemed to me as if I must have known and tended that boy,—and have been his comrade in his happier hours. And when I was older, then the trouble of the father over his afflicted son lay sore upon my heart. All this was but a foreshadowing of our poor lord Sintram, whom I love as my own child; and from time to time the words of that grieving father come straight from my own heart: 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' So that something like that I must have sung or prayed. Dear and revered lord chaplain, it is sometimes right dark before my sight when I think of the manner in which a fearful decree of a father can so horribly hold his poor child in bondage. But, thank God, my faith and my hope are always on high."

"My friend Rolf," said the priest, "all that you tell me of poor Sintram I only half understand, for I know not when nor how this ill has come upon him. If no oath binds you, nor other solemn promise of lips, will you not tell me how it all happened?"

"With all my heart," answered Rolf. "I have

often longed to do so; but you have always been so far apart from us. But now I dare not leave our little sleeping lord any longer alone; and since to-morrow at earliest dawn I must take him back to my knight, could you not perhaps come up with me now, to where the good Sintram is, dear sir?"

The chaplain at once took up the little lamp which Rolf had brought with him, and they strode through the long arched passages. In a distant little chamber they found the poor boy fast asleep. The rays of the lamp strangely lit up his singularly pale face. The priest stood for some time beside him deep in thought, and at last he said—

"Even from his birth he has had these somewhat strong and sharply sculptured features, but now, for a child, they are indeed fearfully so. And yet one must feel lovingly towards the noble little sleeper, whether one would or not."

"You are right indeed, reverend sir," Rolf replied, and one could see how his whole soul was stirred at any word of favour for his dear young lord. Then he placed the light so that it should not dazzle the boy, and led the priest to a comfortable seat. Taking another one opposite, he spoke as follows:—

"On that Christmas festival of which my lord spoke, there had been much discussion among his men about the German merchants, and of means by

which the increasing prosperity of their harbour-towns might be suppressed. Then lord Biorn stretched out his hand towards the golden boar's head, and swore an oath that he would put to death without mercy the first German merchant whom destiny in whatever shape should place alive in his power.

"The gentle Verena turned pale, and would have interposed, but it was too late; the blood-thirsty word was spoken. And at that moment, as if the Tyrant of the Abyss could not wait to lay hold of his doomed vassal, there came a warder into the hall with the news that there were two citizens of a German merchant town, a father and his son, standing now at the gates, imploring shelter of the lords of the castle.

"The knight shuddered in his soul, but he felt himself bound by his over hasty word of honour above the accursed heathenish golden boar. The vassals were ordered to assemble in the castle court with their sharp steel lances, and at a given word to fall upon these poor seekers of our shelter.

"The first, and I hope the last time in my life, did I say No! to the command of my knight;—and I said it with loud and prompt decision. God, who best knows whom He will have in His heaven and whom He will not, armed me with endurance and strength.

"And truly the knight Biorn must have perceived whence alone came this disobedience of his old servant, and that such a thing must have respect. For he said, half angry, half mocking, 'Go up to my wife; her people are running about up there; perhaps she is ill. Go up, Rolf the pious,—go, I tell thee, so that women and women may be together!'

"'Mock me if you will,' thought I; and I quietly went on the way appointed me.

"But there met me upon the stairway two of the strangest and most fearful figures I had ever seen. I knew not how they could have gotten into the castle. One of them was most exceeding tall and thin, and of a horrible pallor; the other was a little dwarfish man of hideous features. As I took courage and looked hard at him he seemed to me actually to be"—

Here a slight whimpering and trembling of the sleeping boy interrupted them. Hastening to his side, they both saw upon his countenance a look of fearful dread, and his eyes strove to open but could not. The priest made the Sign of the Cross over him, and gradually he sank back into peaceful sleep again, and the two went softly back to their places.

"You see it is not good to speak of these frightful beings more plainly," said Rolf. "Enough,

they were striding down into the courtyard and I was going up to the chambers of my lady. There indeed was the tender Verena, half fainting through deep anxiety, and I hastened to come to her aid with some of the knowledge which the loving God has given me of the healing power of plant and stone and air. But hardly a little restored, she bade me, with that calm and holy power of hers that you know, to lead her down into the court, for either must she overrule the horrors of this night or she must herself perish in them. We had to pass on our way by the bed of the sleeping Sintram. Ah! my father! the tears came to my eyes as he lay there breathing so peacefully in his smiling sleep."

The old warrior held his hands over his face, and then collecting himself he continued—

"We drew near to the window on the lowest step, we could distinctly hear the voice of the elder merchant, and his noble countenance was clear in the torchlight outside; near to him was the youthful face of his son. 'I call the Lord to witness,' he said, 'that I meant no harm by this house. But in heathen hands must I have fallen, instead of among Christian knights. And if this indeed is so, then strike quickly! And thou, dear son, die in steadfast courage. In heaven we shall learn why this cannot be otherwise.' It seemed to me that I saw those two awful Beings

there in the midst of the tumult of warriors; the pale one had a great curved sword in his hand, the little one a strangely notched spear.

"Then Verena tore open the window, and cried out with clear flute-like voice into the wild night: 'My dearly beloved lord and husband will surely have mercy on these men! for this our child's sake! Oh, save them from death, and withstand the evil spirits!'

"The knight answered back in his fury— Ah! let me not say what! He staked his child, calling upon Death and the Devil to come if he did not keep his word.

"But still! the boy is trembling again. Let me bring the dark story to an end.

"Knight Biorn bade his men to strike forthwith, and glared with that fierce flaming look from which he is named Biorn of the Fiery Eyes. At the same time the two fearful creatures were seen bestirring themselves. Thereupon Verena called out in a loud voice of anguish: 'Help Thou! O Lord, my Saviour!' At once the demon figures vanished, and knights and vassals began raging blindly and violently against each other, without harm to either side, or touching the lives of the threatened guests. These men, bowing reverently to Verena, betook themselves, silently praying, to the castle gates which

at that very moment were struck with a whirling gust that tore open the bolts and left the way free into the mountain region beyond.

"But as my lady and I stood yet perplexed upon the stairway, it seemed to me that I saw those two frightful figures glide past me softly as a mist. 'Rolf, in God's name,' Verena said to me, 'didst thou too see that great pale man and the horrible little one stepping up the stairway?' Swiftly I flew after them, and into Sintram's room,—and there I found the poor boy in the very state in which you saw him a few hours ago.

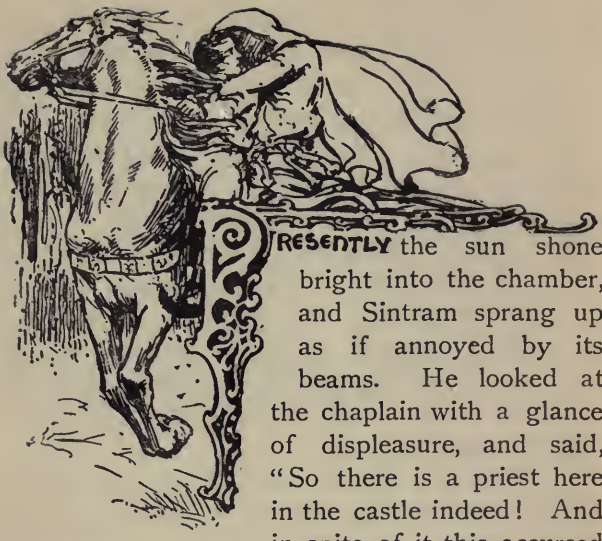
"Since that day, always at this time, the same thing comes back again, and the poor boy has become curiously changed by it. Our lady sees in it the visible punishment and warning of Heavenly might. And because the knight continued from day to day, instead of repenting, to become still more 'Biorn of the Fiery Eyes,' she has withdrawn herself from us, and gone to live utterly alone within convent walls, that by unceasing prayer she may win eternal mercy and present help for herself and her poor child."

Rolf ceased, and after long thought the chaplain said, "Now I can understand why it was that at that time, six years ago, Biorn in his confession would speak to me only of a vague guilt,

without any precise explaining of it,—and why our lady should have been so easily allowed to seek that cloistral home. There must have been a remnant of shame stirring in his heart, that stirs perhaps yet. The tender flower Verena could remain no longer exposed to his violence. But who shall save and protect poor Sintram?"

"His mother's prayers will save him," Rolf said. "And when the dawn is coming, as now, and the morning air whispers through the glimmering casement, it is always to me as though I saw the dear eyes of our lady shining and heard the sweet tones of her voice. The holy Verena will, through God, be our help."

"And so also shall *our* earnest prayers," added the chaplain; and he and Rolf knelt down silently and fervently, in the early morning glow, by the bedside of the pallid boy, who smiled in his dreams.



PRESENTLY the sun shone bright into the chamber, and Sintram sprang up as if annoyed by its beams. He looked at the chaplain with a glance of displeasure, and said, "So there is a priest here in the castle indeed! And in spite of it this accursed dream must torment me before his very eyes. A pretty sort of priest he must be!"

"My child," said the chaplain softly, "I have prayed with all my heart for thee,—and I pray now and always. But it is God alone who is mighty."

"You speak very freely to the son of knight Biorn," cried Sintram. "'My child,' indeed! If those horrible dreams had not come to me again last night you would make me laugh heartily!"

"Lord Sintram," said the chaplain, "that you do

not know me does not surprise me at all, for indeed I no longer know you." And the tears came to his eyes.

The good Rolf looked sorrowfully into the boy's face. "My dear young lord, you are so much better than you allow yourself to seem; why is it so? Do you not remember, then, you who have so good a memory, that kind old friend the chaplain who long ago used to come to our castle, and who used to bring you beautiful pictures and sing you sweet songs?"

"Ah yes, I know!" Sintram answered thoughtfully. "And my sainted mother was alive then."

"Our gracious lady is still alive, thank God;" and Rolf smiled kindly.

"But not for us! not for us poor sick ones here!" cried Sintram. "And why should I not call her sainted? Surely she knows nothing of my dreams!"

"Ah yes, she knows them," said the chaplain; "she knows them, and she calls upon God for you. But keep watch on your wild and haughty nature. There might, alas, easily there might be a time when nothing of your dreams would she know! And that would be when body and soul were parted, and then neither would the holy angels know you more."

Sintram sank as thunder-stricken upon his bed, and Rolf sighed lightly: "Not so harshly should you speak to my sick child, reverend sir."

But the boy arose with tearful eyes, fondly drew near to the chaplain, and said, "Let him do as he will, thou good tender Rolf. He knows well enough what he is about. Wouldst thou scold him if I were falling into an ice cleft and he should pull me back quickly and roughly by the hair of my head?"

The priest looked tenderly at him, and was about to make a further remark, when Sintram with a wild stare sprang suddenly from the bed and asked about his father. When he heard the tale of the knight's departure he refused to stay himself an hour longer in the castle. He laughed away the fears of the priest and warrior lest a rapid journey forth might do harm to his yet only half restored health.

"Reverend sir, and dear old Rolf," he said, "only believe me, that if there were no dreams about I should be the soundest youth on earth, and even as it is I am not much behind the best of them. Besides, for a whole year I am done with dreams now."

At his somewhat imperious nod Rolf at once led out the horses; the boy swung boldly into his

saddle, and with a last kindly greeting to the chaplain spurred straight as an arrow towards the slippery gorges of the snow-clad mountains.

He and his old companion had not gone far, when out of a cleft in the rock near them they heard a muffled sound, something like the clapper of a little mill, that was mingled with the noise of hollow groans, as of a human being in anguish. They turned their horses towards it, and a strange sight met their eyes.

A tall man, pale as death, in pilgrim's dress, was vainly struggling with all his might to climb up through the deep snowdrifts upon the mountain. There was a great number of bones fastened upon his raiment, which rattled together as he moved and made the mysterious sound which they had heard.

Rolf crossed himself in terror, but the bolder Sintram called out, "What are you doing there, pray? What does this lonely toiling mean?"

"I live in death!" said the figure, with a frightful grin.

"What are those bones that thou hast upon thee?"

"They are relics, young sir."

"Art thou a pilgrim?"

"Restless! peaceless! over hill and dale I wander!"

"But thou shalt not perish in the snow before our eyes."

"That will I not do!"

"Then thou must sit with me upon my horse."

"That will I!"

And immediately, with unexpected strength and agility, he sprang out of the snow, and seated himself behind Sintram, clasping him tightly with his long arms, so that the horse, startled by the rattling of the bones, and as if struck by frenzy, fled wildly off through the pathless valleys. Soon the boy found himself quite alone with his strange companion, for the alarmed and anxious Rolf, left far behind, strove in vain to overtake them.

At last the horse slid, without falling however, down a steep icy slope into a narrow ravine, and although he still foamed in fury beyond the power of his rider to curb, his headlong course was now broken into a wild rough trot, making it possible for Sintram to speak to the stranger.

"Draw thy raiment closer about thee, thou pale man, so that the bones upon it will not clatter so, and that I may hold in my horse."

"No help for it, my boy, no help for it. These bones must ever rattle."

"Don't press me so close with thy long arms; thy arms are so cold!"

"It cannot be otherwise, my boy, it cannot be otherwise. My long cold arms press not yet upon thy heart."

"Do not breathe upon me with thy freezing breath, for all my strength goes from me."

"I must breathe, my boy, I must breathe; but do not mind it. I do not blow thee away."

This weird conversation suddenly ended, for unexpectedly they came out into a clear sunlit snow-plain, and Sintram saw his father's castle before him. Whilst he was reflecting as to whether he ought not to invite this unearthly guest to enter, the Pilgrim himself settled all doubt of the matter by springing suddenly from the horse, which, in surprise at this hasty movement, stood still. With forefinger raised, he said to Sintram—

"Well do I know the old fiery-eyed Biorn; perhaps, indeed, too well. Greet him for me. He will not need to know my name; he will know me by your description."

Therewith he turned aside into the dense firwood thicket, and disappeared among the closing branches, rattling as he went.

Slowly and thoughtfully Sintram rode on step by step upon his now quiet and exhausted horse to his father's halls. He hardly knew just what he should tell of his strange journey, and what he

should leave untold. He was full of anxiety about the good Rolf, left so far behind him on the way. So that almost before he was aware he found himself at the castle gate. The drawbridge rattled down, the gates flew open. A servant accompanied the young lord into the great hall, where the knight Biorn sat alone at the mighty table, with many suits of armour standing ranged about it, and a great array of glasses and flagons. It was a custom of the knight to have with him daily in place of living company the suits of armour that had belonged to his ancestors—with visors shut—sitting and standing around his table.

And the father and son spoke with each other.

"Where is Rolf?"

"I do not know, my father. He was lost from me in the mountains."

"I shall have Rolf shot,—because he cannot take better care of my only child."

"Then, my father, you may have your only child shot along with him, for without Rolf I could not live; and if arrows are let fly at him, or any other weapon, I should get in the way of the sharp points, and shield his faithful heart with my unworthy breast."

"Well, then Rolf shall not be shot—but he shall be driven away from my castle."

"Then you will see me driven away with him, my father,—and I will be his faithful servant out in the forests on the mountains."

"Well, then indeed must Rolf stay here."

"That is what I think, my father."

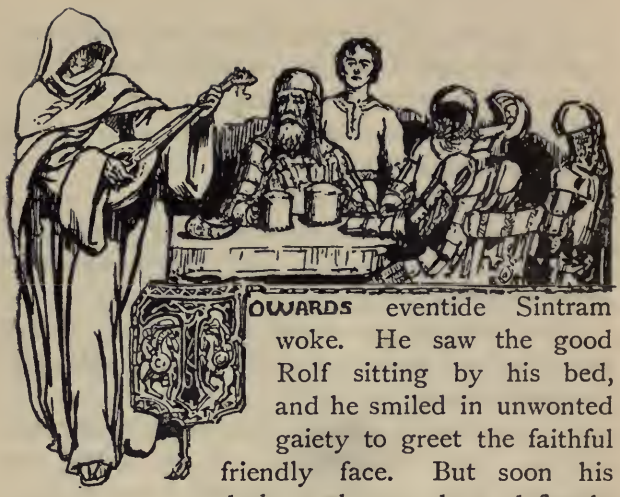
"But wert thou riding alone?"

"No, my father; and, moreover, I have been with the strangest of pilgrims,—one who said that he knew thee well, and perhaps even too well."

Then Sintram proceeded to tell him all that had happened, and all that the strange pale man had said to him.

"I know him, indeed, very well," said the knight; "he is half-crazed, and yet withal not without wisdom too, as sometimes strangely happens among men. But, my boy, thou must go and rest now after thy wild flight. Thou hast my word of honour that Rolf shall be kindly received, and even sought for out in the mountains in case he should not return soon."

"I depend upon thee, my father," Sintram replied half meekly, half defiant; and did according to the wish of the stern knight.



TOWARDS eventide Sintram woke. He saw the good Rolf sitting by his bed, and he smiled in unwonted gaiety to greet the faithful friendly face. But soon his dark eyebrows drew defiantly together again, and he asked—

"How wert thou received by my father, Rolf? Did he say a single unfriendly word?"

"He did not indeed, my dear lord; in fact he said nothing at all to me. At first he glared at me rather angrily, but composed himself, and bade the servant bring plenty of food and wine,—and then to take me up to thee."

"He ought to have kept his word better than that. But he is my father, and we must not ask too much. But now I will go to supper."

So saying, he sprang up and threw his fur mantle around him. But Rolf stood imploringly in the

way. "Dear lord, indeed it will be better if thou wilt have the meal in thy chamber this evening. There is company with thy father that I should not like to see thee share. Thou shalt have the most beautiful songs and stories that I know."

"That is what I would like more than anything else in the world, dear Rolf," Sintram answered. "Only it is not given to me to avoid any kind of man. Tell me who is it that I should find with my father?"

"Ah, my lord, thou hast already found him, out in the mountains. Formerly, when I used to ride out with knight Biorn, we used sometimes to meet him; but I was bidden to tell thee nothing about him; and now he has got into the castle for the first time."

"It is the crazed Pilgrim then," Sintram answered, and stood awhile in deep thought, as if considering. At last, collecting himself, he said, "Good old friend, I had far rather stay here alone with thee and thy stories and songs, and all the pilgrims in this world should not entice me out of this quiet room, but for one thing. I find in myself a sort of cowardly fear of that pale monstrous man, and by such fear as that dare no knight's son be overcome. Do not be angry, dear Rolf, but indeed I must look face to face with this dread Pilgrim."

And he shut the door of the chamber, and went with firm resounding step down into the hall.

Knight Biorn and the Pilgrim sat there opposite each other at the great table, upon which there were many candles burning; it was a strange sight to see the two huge grim figures moving, eating, and drinking, amidst the silent array of lifeless armour.

The Pilgrim looked up as the boy entered, and knight Biorn said: "Him you know already, he is my only child; he was your fellow-traveller this morning."

The Pilgrim fixed upon Sintram a long and earnest gaze, and shaking his head, murmured, "I did not even know of it."

The boy answered impatiently, "It must be said you are unfair enough! You know my father far too well, you said; and me it seems you know far too little. Look me in the face! Who was it that let you ride with him this morning, and whom did you thank for it by driving his good horse mad with fright? Speak if you can!"

Knight Biorn shook his head, laughing, but well pleased, as he always was, with his son's wild behaviour, but the Pilgrim shrank as if filled with anxious dread of some all-compelling power. "Yes, yes, my dear young hero, you are perfectly right; you are right in everything you please to say."

Then the knight laughed more loudly, and cried, "Why, Pilgrim, you wiseacre, what has become of all your fine warnings and sermons? Has the boy stricken you all at once dumb and feeble? Defend yourself, prophet! Defend yourself, saint!"

But the Pilgrim threw a frightened glance across at Biorn, which quenched the fire of his eyes, and said in thundering tones, "Between thee and me, my old one, it is another thing. There is nothing that we can cast at each other. But wait; I will sing you a little song upon the lute." And he reached behind him, where upon the wall there hung a forgotten and half unstrung lute, which he nevertheless adjusted with wonderful power and skill, and after striking a few chords, began this song to the deep mournful tones of the instrument—

"The floweret was mine, it was mine!
Yet I, I have staked my holiest right,
And I am a servant who once was a knight,
Through sin that was mine,—sin alone!

The floweret was thine, it was thine!
Why heldst thou not fast thy holiest right?
Thou servant of sin, and no longer a knight,
Most grievously art thou alone!"

"Beware!" he added with harsh voice thereto, and tore the strings with such force that they all broke again, with a wail as of grief, and a cloud

of dust flew out of the bottom of the old zither, surrounding the singer like a mist.

Sintram during the singing had gazed at him intently, and at last it seemed to him incomprehensible that this could be indeed one and the same with his morning's companion. The doubt changed almost into a certainty as the stranger again looked at him with the same anxious timidity, bowing low as he turned to hang the zither in its old place; and then running as in abject terror out of the hall, in strange contrast with the haughty and solemn mien in which he had cast the look of reproach upon lord Biorn.

AFTER this occurrence a dire sickness overtook the once vigorous knight, during which, although his mind wandered and he was hardly conscious of his words, he constantly declared that he should recover. He laughed scornfully over each returning access of fever, and reproached it for waging so needless a conflict. Often he murmured to himself, "That was not the right one, not the right one yet. There must be another out there in the cold mountains."

At these words Sintram always gave an involuntary shudder. They seemed to confirm his suspicion that the one who had ridden his horse

and he who had sat at the table were two entirely different beings; and he did not know why, but this thought had something monstrous and awful about it.

When knight Biorn finally recovered, he seemed to have entirely forgotten the incident of the Pilgrim's visit. He hunted in the mountains, he fought in many a daring conflict; and the growing Sintram became his almost daily companion; so that more and more with every year a tremendous strength of body and spirit developed in the youth. His tall, lean and sinewy figure, his pale sharp countenance and dark stern eye were somewhat feared by all; but nevertheless none hated him, not even those upon whom in his wild outbreaks he had inflicted wrong or injury. This might have been for the sake of old Rolf, who was always with him and continued to keep a loving power over him; but many who had known the lady Verena when she still lived in the world maintained that through the dissimilar features of her son there was nevertheless a faint glow of his mother's sweetness that won their hearts.

Once in the early spring Biorn and his son were hunting near the borders of the sea, trespassing upon strange ground; this not so much for the sake of the hunting to be found there, as for that

of offering defiance to a neighbour whom they hated, and with whom they hoped in this way to kindle a feud. Sintram was at this time, having just recovered from his hideous winter dreams, bolder and more daring than ever before. To-day he was sorely angered, because the adversary he sought did not sally forth in arms from his castle to forbid their hunt, and he cursed in violent language such cowardly weakness and forbearance. Just then one of his wild young followers rushed towards him, shouting joyously, "Take comfort, my lord Sintram, I am sure that all will yet be as we wish, for as I ran in the chase towards the seacoast I saw a sail drawing towards us; a ship full of men in shining armour. What if it be your enemy seeking to attack you from the sea!"

Gladly, and with secrecy, Sintram summoned all his hunters, determined this time to take the fight upon himself alone, and afterwards to meet his father with a bold surprise, a conqueror at the head of his prisoners, with the spoils of war. Well acquainted with every crevice and thicket and cliff-path of the coast, the huntsmen hid themselves around the place of anchorage, and soon the swelling sails of the strange vessel came nearer; then it lay quietly in the bay, and finally her men began in joyous thoughtlessness of harm to land upon the shore.

Beyond all of them, heroic and distinguished of mien, was a knight clad in steel-blue armour richly inlaid with gold. His uncovered head, for he bore the fine-wrought golden helmet upon his left arm, was raised in noble gesture; his face, with the greeting smile of his bearded mouth, and shaded by dark brown locks, was wondrous pleasant to behold.

It seemed to the young Sintram as though he had already before seen this hero. But suddenly he raised an arm to give the signal for the attack. In vain the good Rolf, who had just then with much difficulty reached him, whispered in his ear that this was not the enemy they had looked for, but an unknown, and, without doubt, highly distinguished stranger.

"Be they who they may!" murmured back the enraged Sintram, "they have at least given me a foolish hope, and they shall repent it. Not another word if you care for my life and your own!"

And immediately he gave the signal; so that thick as hail spears descended on every hand, and soon the Norwegian warriors set upon the newcomers with flashing blades.

They found their opponents as brave as could be wished, and perhaps somewhat braver. More fell in the ranks of those who made the attack

than of those who defended themselves, and the strangers seemed to understand surprisingly well the Norseland fashion of fighting. In the haste of the onset the great knight in steel and gold had not had time to fasten on his helmet again, and it seemed as though he thought it scarcely worth his while to do so. His shining blade protected him surely enough; and the darts that were thrown he seized with lightning swiftness, and turned them aside with such force that they sometimes fell broken to the ground.

Sintram had not at first been able to press near to him, because all were so anxious to take so noble a prey that they crowded about the shining hero wherever he might turn, but at last the way opened enough for Sintram with battle-cry and high swung sword to spring to meet him. "Gabriele!" cried the knight, and with ease intercepted the mighty stroke and felled the youth with a powerful sword-thrust of his own, and then kneeling upon his breast flashed a glancing dagger before his astonished eyes. Like a wall around him stood the band of his quickly assembled followers. Sintram seemed lost, without hope of rescue.

He willed to die as beseemed a bold fighter; and thus stared steadfastly at the naked weapon with wide-open eyes.

But as he looked up, it seemed to him as if suddenly there appeared a vision from heaven of a wonderfully beautiful woman's form in shining raiment of blue and gold.

"Our forefathers were right then about Valkyries," he said. "Strike, then, thou unknown victor!"

But this the knight did not do, nor was it a Valkyrie that had appeared, but only the beautiful wife of the stranger hero, who had come to the edge of the high ship's deck and looked down into Sintram's face.

"Folko," cried a sweet voice, "thou noble knight without reproach, I know that thou sparest the conquered."

Up rose the hero, and with noble manner reached his hand to the conquered youth, and said, "Thank the noble lady of Montfaucon for thy life and freedom. But if thou art so far from all good that thou wouldst begin the fight again, here I stand, and have thy will!"

But Sintram sank in deep shame upon his knees and wept, for long had they known of the great deeds of this his own kinsman—the French knight Folko de Montfaucon, and of the loveliness of his sweet wife Gabriele.

WONDERING looked the great lord down upon his strange foe, more and more reminded of that Norseland race from which he knew himself descended, and with whom he had always been in friendly relation. A golden bear's claw upon Sintram's cloak made him at last certain.

"Hast thou not," he asked, "a mighty kinsman, the sea-king Arinbiorn, who bears a golden vulture's wing upon his helmet? And is not thy father lord Biorn? For I think that the bear's claw upon thy breast is an heraldic badge of your race."

Sintram assented to this in deep and humble contrition. Lord Montfaucon assisted him to rise, and said in grave and gentle tone, "Then

we are kinsmen,—but never would I have believed that one of our noble house would fall upon a peaceful man without cause and without warning."

"Slay me," answered Sintram, "if indeed I am worthy of death at such noble hands, I would no longer see the light of the sun."

"Because thou art overthrown?" Montfaucon asked him.

Sintram shook his head.

"Or because thou hast committed an unknightly deed?"

The red mounting to Sintram's cheek answered "Yes."

"Then shouldst thou not wish to die," continued Montfaucon, "but rather to live to atone for thy crime, and to clear thy name through future noble deeds. Thou art blest with valiant strength, and the eagle eye of a leader of men. I should have made thee a knight without further trial hadst thou but fought in as good a cause as this was a bad one. See to it that I may soon be able to do so. For there may yet be made of thee a vessel of high honour."

A sound of joyous music interrupted this speech; Gabriele, radiant as the morning, had now come down from the ship with all her maidens, and being informed in a few words from Folko who it

was that had been his foe, she treated the combat as having been only a trial of strength, saying, "You must not be downcast, noble sir, that my husband has won the prize; for you must know that on the whole earth there is but one single hero whom Montfaucon has not overcome. And who knows," she added, half joking, "if that indeed had happened, but that he had at that time undertaken to win for me the magic ring—me who before God and my own heart was his affianced bride."

Folko bowed, smiling over the snow-white hand of his dear lady, and bade the youth lead them to his father's castle. For the landing of their horses and possessions of value Rolf undertook the charge, in great joy to know that an angel in woman's form had appeared to soften and soothe his dear young lord, and also perhaps to set him free from that early curse.

Sintram had previously sent messengers forward to seek his father and announce their noble guests, and therefore they found lord Biorn already at the castle, with all prepared for a fitting reception.

Gabriele entered, not without a shudder, that vast and gloomy castle, and looked with still more awe into the fiery eyes of the castle's knight; the pale, dark-haired Sintram also somewhat arousing

her fears. She sighed to herself, "To what grim abode has my knight brought me? Oh, were I only at home in my pleasant Gascony, or even in thy knightly Normandy."

But the grave and noble reception, the deep and most reverent care for her tender grace, no less than for the knightly Folko's fame, restored her courage, and soon her pleasure in everything new was aroused by the strange and unwonted surroundings of this foreign world. Then, too, she could have but a passing fear with her knight so near at hand; she knew too well in what keeping was given anything that was dear to the great lord of Montfaucon.

Through the great hall, where they were all soon seated, now came Rolf, accompanying the servants of the strangers, who were carrying their luggage into the chambers. Gabriele perceived her favourite lute in the hands of one of her servants, and bade him bring it to her, that she might try whether the beloved instrument had suffered any harm from the long sea voyage. As she bent over, tuning it with tender care, her beautiful fingers touching the strings, a smile like the light of spring touched the stern faces of Biorn and Sintram, and both of them sighed, "Ah, if you would only play, and would sing to us a little, that would be pleasure indeed." The lady smiled at the

flattering speech, and in gracious assent sang these words—

"Though blossoms come in joyous May,
When all the world's made young again,
And nature sings her roundelay,
One thing, alas! I'll ne'er regain.

I know within me what it is,
Its name may pass my lips no more,
But, oh! to me 'twas sweetest bliss,
Bliss! perfect bliss! but all is o'er.

Sing not so sweetly, Nightingale,
From out the blossoming boughs above,
My beating, throbbing heart will fail—
To hear thee singing to thy love.

Sing not, for though the flowers are here,
And o'er us float the clouds of May,
That thing I held in life most dear
Is lost for ever and for aye."

The two Norwegian knights sat in an unwonted mood as in a melancholy dream; but the eyes of Sintram gleamed with a milder radiance, the colour had mounted to his pale cheek, and his features softened, so that he seemed as one inspired. The good Rolf, who stood by while the song was sung, was overjoyed, and clasped his faithful old hands in fervent thanks to God.

Gabriele in her astonishment could hardly take her eyes from Sintram. At last she said, "Will you not tell me, my young lord, what there is in

this little song that has so much struck you? It is nothing at all, only one of the simple songs of spring, such as are sung at that beautiful time by thousands in my native land, that are all very much alike."

"Have you indeed such a most wonderful home, full of songs like that?" cried Sintram, enraptured. "Oh, then, I am no longer surprised at your celestial beauty, nor at the power which you have over my hard and bewildered heart. It must be from a paradise of song indeed that such angel messengers are sent to the rest of this rude world;" and he fell upon his knees in humble adoration before the lovely lady.

Folko smiled his sympathy, but Gabriele seemed to feel a distressing confusion, as if she did not know what to do with the half-wild young Norseman whom she had captivated. After a little reflection, however, she gave him her hand as she gently bade him rise, and said—

"One who finds so much pleasure in song must surely know how to waken such pleasure in others. Take my lute, and let us have one of your own beautiful and inspiring songs."

But Sintram gently put the delicate instrument aside, and said—

"Heaven forbid that I should touch those fine and delicate strings with my rude hand. For

even if I began a gentle melody, the tones of my inborn wild spirit would at last prevail, and there would be an end of the beautiful lute, both form and sound. No, permit me to bring forth my own strong great harp, with its strings of bear sinews in their brazen fitting, for I do indeed feel the inspiration to play and sing."

Gabriele assented, half smiling, half affrighted, and Sintram instantly brought forth his harp and to its deep resounding notes began a song in his not less powerful voice—

"Whither, O Knight, in the raging gale?"
"To the Southern land have I set my sail."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

"I have trodden enough the fields of snow,
I will dance where meadows of clover grow."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

And he steered by the sun and the stars his way,
Till he cast his anchor in Naples bay.
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

There strolled a sweet lady upon the strand,
Her hair was bound with a golden band.
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

"Now greeting to thee, sweet maiden fine,
This day, this day shalt thou be mine!"
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

"But I am a Margrave's bride, my lord,
It is but this day that I gave my word."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

"Then let him come forth, thy valiant lord,
Thou shalt be to him with the bravest sword."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

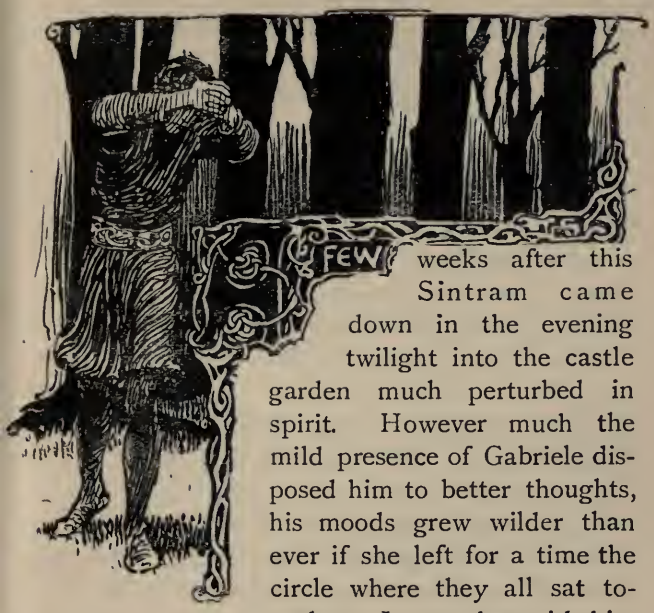
"Ah, seek you another maiden true,
Here is many a flower that may bloom for you."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

"It is thou alone who shalt be my bride,
And nothing on earth shall turn me aside."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

Then the Margrave came in his anger brave,
And won for himself but a grassy grave.
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

And the joyful Norseland hero spake:
"Now bride and castle and lands I take."
Oh, the sweet land of flowers!

Sintram stopped, with his eye sparkling wildly, and the strings of his harp still vibrating long after the bold and wondrous touch. Biorn sat again upright and haughty in his seat, stroked his great beard, and rattled his sword upon the ground with pleasure. Gabriele trembled before this wild song and these strange figures, but not after she had glanced at the baron Folko Montfaucon, who sat there, an heroic presence, still smiling and letting the bold uproar pass him by as though it were the raging of an autumn storm.



FEW weeks after this Sintram came down in the evening twilight into the castle garden much perturbed in spirit. However much the mild presence of Gabriele disposed him to better thoughts, his moods grew wilder than ever if she left for a time the circle where they all sat together. It was thus with him now after she had been a long time kindly reading to his father Biorn out of an old book of heroes, and had at last gone back to her chamber. The voice of her lute indeed sounded from her window out into the garden, but it was as if this of itself only drove the youth so much more impetuously forth through the shadows of the centuried elms. Suddenly bending under an overhanging bough he came unawares quite close upon something over

which he nearly stumbled, and which at first sight seemed to him like a very small bear, standing upright, with a strange long crooked horn upon his head. He sprang back horrified, whereupon the creature spoke to him in a harsh human voice—

"Knightly blood! bold young knightly blood! Whence? Whither? And why so frightened?"

And now Sintram saw that it was a very little old man who stood there, wrapped in a rough fur, so that one could see but little of his face, and he had a curious high feather in his cap.

"Whence *thou*? and whither *thou*?" cried Sintram, stepping back. "That is the proper thing to ask. What are you doing here in our castle garden you ugly little being?"

"Well now," laughed the other, "I'm thinking I am quite big enough as I am. Men can't all be giants. And what do you find amiss in my hunting for snails here? Snails don't belong to the high class of game that you clever knights keep solely for your own sport. I know how to brew a fine fragrant drink out of them though, and I have already gathered enough for the day,—wonderful fat beasts, with wise human faces, and curiously wound horns on their heads. Will you see them, sir? Here!" And he plucked and scratched about his fur garment, so that Sintram, seized with a sickening disgust cried—

"Faugh! I hate the things! Stop that, and tell me who and what you really are!"

"Are you so set upon having my name?" said the little man. "Be satisfied that I am a wise master of all sorts of secret knowledge, that reaches to the oldest and most intricate things in history. If you would only listen. But you're afraid of me."

"Afraid of *thee*!" laughed Sintram wildly.

"I have met better men than you who have been," murmured the Little Master, "but they liked just as little to hear it."

"To show you the contrary," said Sintram, "I will stay with you here until the moon is high in the heavens. But you must tell me your stories meanwhile."

The Little Master nodded with pleasure, and whilst they both paced up and down the secluded elm walk together, he discoursed as follows:—

"Many, many hundred years ago there lived a young and beautiful knight who was called Paris of Troy, and he lived in the glowing southern land, where are the sweetest songs, the most fragrant flowers, and the most charming women to be found You know the song they sing about them, young sir, 'Oh, the sweet land of flowers!' do you not?"

Sintram nodded, and a deep sigh came from his breast.

"Now," went on Little Master, "this Paris led

a kind of life that is common in those countries, and one that they sing many beautiful songs about; he lived whole months long in a shepherd's dress, and wandered about in the woods and fields with his flute; sheep and lambs at pasture around him. There came to him once three beautiful goddesses, who were disputing about a golden apple, and they asked if he could tell them which one of the three was the most beautiful, for it was she who was to have the golden apple. The first one was able to bestow thrones and sceptres and crowns; the next one had the power to make people wise; and the third knew all sorts of love-charms that could win the hearts of the fairest maidens. Each one offered to give the Shepherd Knight her best gifts if he would award to her the golden apple. But since fair women pleased him more than all else in the world, he said that the third one was most beautiful. Her name was Venus. Both of the others then went away in great anger, but Venus bade him put on his knightly armour, and his helmet with its waving feathers, and she led him away to a shining citadel called Sparta, where reigned the noble Duke Menelaus with his young Duchess Helen. Helen was the most beautiful of all women, and it was she whom the goddess wished to give Paris in return for having awarded her the golden apple. Paris wished for nothing better, and the

only question was how he should approach the matter."

"Paris must have been a pretty sort of knight," interrupted Sintram. "That was easy enough! The husband challenged to a fight, and he who wins to take the lady!"

"But the Duke Menelaus was the knight's friend and guest."

"But listen, Little Master," cried Sintram, "he ought to have asked the goddess for some other beautiful woman, and then have saddled his horse, or pulled up his anchor, and off!"

"Yes, yes," that is easily said, answered the other, "but if you had only seen how charming the Duchess Helen was. There could be no one to exchange her for." And with glowing words he went on to describe the wonderful Helen. But feature for feature the picture was like Gabriele, and Sintram trembled so that he leaned against a tree for support. Little Master stood opposite, laughing.

"How is it now? Would you still advise poor knight Paris to flee?"

"Tell me quickly how it ended," stammered Sintram.

"The goddess was honourable towards the knight," said Little Master. "She told him beforehand that if he should carry off the charming

duchess to his own city, Troy, he and his castle and his whole race should come to ruin; but that for ten years he would be able to defend himself in Troy, and rejoice in the sweet love of Helen."

"And he took the risk—or he was a fool!" cried the youth.

"He did indeed," whispered Little Master. "He took it indeed; and I should have done the same myself. And only think of it, my young hero, things were just the same then as they are to us this very day. Through the high thick branches the moon looked out from the clouds, silent and dim. By an ancient tree, just as you are standing, stood the slender, ardent knight Paris, and by his side the goddess Venus, but so disguised and bewitched that she may not have looked much more beautiful than I do; and in the silver light of the moon there came between the whispering branches the figure of the adorable duchess, walking alone." He was silent, and, as in the mirror of his beguiling words, there appeared Gabriele herself, pacing thoughtfully down the walk of elms.

"Man! hideous Master! What shall I call you? What are you trying to do with me?" whispered the trembling Sintram.

"You know your father's strong castle of Steinburg, on the Rocks of the Moon?" said

the old man. "There the castellan and the servants are faithful and devoted. It would withstand a ten years' siege, and the little gate from here out into the mountains stands open, as to Paris stood open the gates of the castle in Sparta."

And the youth indeed saw that in some unknown way a gate in the wall had been left open, and he could see through it the far-off mountain range shining under the moon.

"And," repeated Little Master, laughing,—"and —if he did not take it, he was a fool!"

By this time Gabriele stood close by him. With a slight motion of his arm he could have checked her course, and at that moment the moonbeams suddenly lit up her heavenly beauty. Almost was Sintram bending forward.

"My God and Lord!
Turn Thou his heart
Far from the things of earth apart.
Call him unto
Thy heaven's light
Through sorrow to the eternal Right."

These words were sung by the old Rolf just at this moment, coming from the castle moat, on whose banks he had been praying alone to Heaven, full of anxious care; and they came to Sintram's ear.

And Sintram stood as if spellbound, making the Sign of the Cross. Immediately Little Master leaped off with a strange clumsy speed, hopping upon one leg through the mountain gate, and shutting it with a shrill grating noise behind him.

Gabriele started, frightened at the loud clang, and then Sintram drew near to her softly, and said, offering his arm, "Will you allow me to lead you back into the castle hall? The night is often wild and terrible in our northern mountains."

WITHIN, they found the two knights sitting over their wine. Folko was talking in his usual gay and friendly manner, and Biorn was listening, somewhat darkly frowning, but still as if the clouds were melting away more and more, even against his will, in the new and cheerful surroundings.

Gabriele greeted her knight with a smile, and making a signal for him to go on, she took her place near lord Biorn, full of kindly attention. Sintram stood, sad and dreaming, by the fire, stirring up the embers that cast a strange glow upon his pallid face.

"And beyond all other German cities," Montfaucon went on, "is the city of Hamburg, great and magnificent. We welcome their merchants to our Norman coasts, and find these wise and good people always ready with help and advice that is

needed. On the first visit that I ever made to Hamburg, I was treated with the greatest honour. At the time, indeed, they were engaged in warfare with a neighbouring count, and I at once used my sword in their service with vigour and success."

"Your sword! your knightly sword!" interrupted Biorn, and the old flaming fire came into his eyes. "Your sword for shopmen, against a knight!"

"My lord," said Folko calmly, "how the barons of Montfaucon should use their swords has always been their own affair, without the meddling of another; and I expect to hand down this good custom as I have inherited it. If that offends you, speak freely. But nevertheless I forbid any uncivil word against the Hamburgers; I have already made them known to you as my friends."

Biorn sank his proud eyes, and the fire in them died. He said, in a gentle voice, "Speak on, noble lord. You are right, and I am wrong."

Folko reached him a friendly hand across the table, and continued his story—

"The dearest of all my Hamburg friends are two men of wonderful character and experience, a father and son. What had they not seen and done in the farthest ends of the earth,—what good had they not wrought in their native town! My own life is, I thank God, not of the most barren, but compared with the wise Gotthard Lenz and his

son Rudlieb, I seem to myself a mere trifler, a knight taking part in a few tourneys and riding to the chase within the limits of my own forests. They have converted men from evil, they have taught, they have brought joy unto the people of many dark lands that I cannot even name, and the riches which they have brought back with them they have devoted to the commonwealth as though there were nothing else to be done with it. When they return from their venturous ocean voyages, their first thought is to build towers and fortresses for their country's defence, hospitals for the care of the sick—in which they personally take a share of the services, and halls for the free entertainment of strangers in their city. At their own tables, noble and rich as kings as to the entertainment they offer, yet they are themselves fresh and simple as peasants. Many a tale of adventure accompanies the feast of choice viands and costly wine. They told one among others that raised my hair on end, and now that I am here, perhaps not far from the scene of the story, I may be able to find out from you more about it than he could tell. It seems that several years ago, about a Christmastide, Gotthard and Rudlieb were wrecked in a furious winter storm on the coast of Norway. The spot they could never be exactly sure of; but so much is certain, that not far from it there stood a

gigantic castle, in which father and son sought admittance for such shelter and help as it is the custom to bestow, while they left their followers in charge of the wrecked vessel. The castle gates opened to them, and they thought that all was well, when suddenly the courtyard filled with armed men, who, with sharp lances, closed round the helpless strangers, and treated their protests and entreaties with silence or a laugh of scorn. At last there came a knight of fiery aspect down the steps,—they knew not whether he was a spectre or a wild heathen man, but at a sign from him the deadly lances were levelled. Then a woman's gentle voice calling upon the Saviour reached their ears, and in confused rage the warriors around them fell on one another; the castle gates flew open, and the strangers were enabled to escape, seeing in a lighted window of the castle, as they rushed out, the figure of a fair woman, who stood as if keeping watch over them.

"With great difficulty their wrecked vessel was again set afloat, and, betaking themselves to the sea rather than to any other spot upon this heathenish coast, after many perils they at last arrived in Denmark.

"They suppose the savage castle to have been some heathen stronghold, but I believe it rather to have been some deserted ruin where hellish

goblins held nightly revel, for what heathen even could have offered to shipwrecked men death instead of shelter?"

Biorn stared before him as if turned into stone. But Sintram left the hearth, and coming to the table, said, "My lord and father, let us seek out this God-forsaken place and level it with the ground. I do not know why, but it seems to me that this accursed affair has something to do with my frightful dreams."

Biorn looked in rage at his son, and had perhaps spoken some terrible word, but that God willed he should not, for at this moment the harsh brazen notes of a trumpet broke in upon their assembly, the great doors were ceremoniously flung open, and a herald entered the hall.

He bowed solemnly. "I am sent by old Jarl Eirick. Two nights ago he returned from his voyage in the Grecian seas. His wish had been to take revenge on the island of Chios, because fifty years ago his father had been put to death there by the soldiers of the Emperor. But your cousin, the sea-king Arinbiorn, whose ship lay at anchor in the bay, spoke of reconciliation, and declared that upon that island where the songs of Homer were so gloriously sung there should no desolation be wrought. But of reconciliation would Jarl Eirick hear nothing; and from words it came

to warfare between them; and so complete was the sea-king's victory that Jarl Eirick, after losing two of his ships, has with difficulty escaped on the greatly battered one that was left him. Since Arinbiorn is not now here, the foe now seeks to make those of his race suffer; and wilt thou therefore, Biorn of the Fiery Eyes, render compensation in oxen, gold, and precious goods? Or wilt thou fight with him this day seven nights hence on Niflung's Heath?"

Biorn nodded his head with composure, and said in a friendly tone, "This day, seven nights hence, on Niflung's Heath." He then offered the herald a golden beaker full of noble wine. "Drink it up," he said, "and take the beaker with thee!"

"Greet thy Jarl Eirick also from the baron de Montfaucon," Folko added, "and I will meet him on Niflung's Heath as the sea-king's friend, and the nephew and guest of Biorn."

The herald visibly cowered before the name of Montfaucon, and, bowing deeply, regarded the baron with reverent awe and attention. Then he strode forth.

Gabriele smiled at her knight with fearless and loving smile, so well did she know his renown as victor, and asked only, "Where shall I stay then, Folko, when thou hast gone hence?"

"I thought," Biorn answered, "that it might please you to remain here in my castle, dear lady. As servant and guardian I would leave you my son behind."

Sintram, who had turned to the hearth again, whispered softly and secretly into the now flashing and crackling flames: "Yes, yes! So will it perhaps happen. It is as though Menelaus were just going forth from Sparta to the war, at the time when the knight Paris found the charming lady in the garden at evening."

But Gabriele shuddered, although she knew not why, and said, "Without thee, Folko? And shall I then miss the joy of seeing thee conquer, and the honour of tending thee if by any chance thou art wounded?"

Folko bowing gracefully thanked his lady. "Come with thy knight, if thou desire, my beautiful and courage inspiring wife. It is good to keep the ancient Norseland custom of the presence of women at the warfare of heroes, and no harm will come near the place whence the light of their eyes shines, from any true Norseman. Unless, perhaps," he added, glancing at Biorn, "this Jarl Eirick is not the worthy son of his ancestors?"

"He is a man of honour," assured Biorn.

"So adorn thyself then, adorn thyself then, my beautiful love," said Folko, half singing, "and

come out with us to behold and judge our deeds!"

"Out, out into the fight!" sang also the joyful and inspirited Sintram, and all parted cheerfully and hopefully,—all to their rest, excepting Sintram, who went out into the forest.

NIFLUNG'S Heath was the name of a drear and solemn region in Norway, where it was said that the young Niflung, the son of Hogni, and the last of his race, had darkly ended his own melancholy life. Many ancient gravestones stood about, and upon the lonely oaks which still rustled here and there were the nests of strong eagles, who fought so furiously that the clash of their heavy wings and their angry scream could be heard far off in the surrounding country, terrifying the children in their cradles and old men by their firesides.

As the seventh evening was drawing on there came from the opposite hillsides two hosts of armed men; from the west came Jarl Eirick the old, from the east Biorn of the Fiery Eyes. It was the custom to arrive thus at the chosen ground at an

hour earlier than the appointed one, to prove the eagerness of both parties for the fight.

Folko caused the sky-blue velvet tent which he always carried with him for the shelter of his tender wife to be placed upon the most fitting spot, while Sintram rode over as herald to Jarl Eirick to inform him that it was the fair Gabriele de Montfaucon who would behold the morrow's fight. Eirick bowed low at this courage-inspiring message, and sent forth to his bards the command that they should announce it in song.

"Eirick's daring warriors,
Now begin with shining
Armour to adorn you for the morning's fight!
Fairest of all fair ones
Watches your deserving,
Judges you to-morrow in the intrepid fight.
Over distant billows,
Over field and valley,
Comes the fame of that heroic knight,
Mighty foeman! whose impetuous
Charge to-morrow meets our ranks.
Folko cometh! fight ye, glorious Eirick's band!"

The wonderful tones of this chant reached the tent of Gabriele, and although she was well accustomed to having Folko glorified on all sides, yet hearing his praise thus resounding in the night heavens, from the mouths of his enemies, she had almost fallen on her knees in tribute to her mighty

knight. But Folko pressed her soft hand to his lips, and said, "My deeds belong to thee, and not to me, dearest lady."

The night passed, and the eastern sky was aflame, and all was sound and motion on Niflung's Heath. Heroes donned their clanking armour, horses neighed, and the music of harps and of war-songs sounded to the skies. The morning draught went round in gold and silver cups. Montfaucon, with his warriors in steel-blue mail, led his lady to a hilltop near by, where she would be safe from flying lances, and could oversee the field of battle. The morning light shone solemnly upon her beauty, and as she passed by the camp of Jarl Eirick the men lowered their arms, the chiefs bent low their crested helms. Two of Montfaucon's pages remained in Gabriele's tent, willingly yielding all wish for the combat for so rare a privilege. Both armies passed her by with a greeting, singing as they went; the men set themselves in battle array and the fight began.

The dread Norseland spears flew from mighty hands on both sides, resounding upon the sheltering shields, or striking each other in their flight. Sometimes there fell a warrior either in Eirick's or in Biorn's ranks silent in his blood. Then the knight of Montfaucon advanced with his Norman

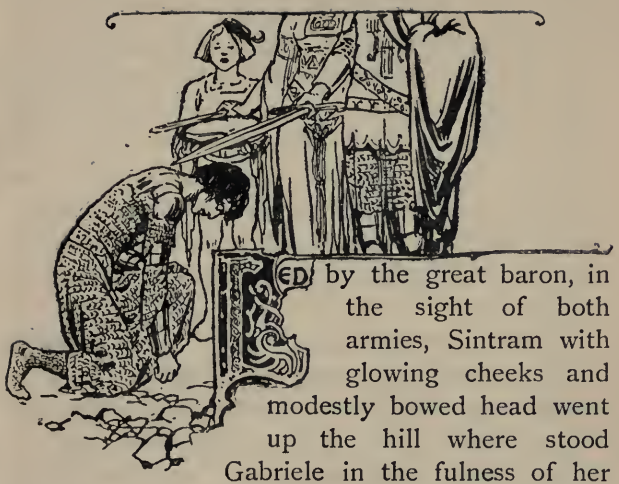
riders, as he passed sending a greeting with his flashing blade to Gabriele, and then dashed with a war-cry into the enemy's left wing. Eirick's foot-soldiers, kneeling firmly, received them with spears rigid as iron, and many a noble steed, wounded to death, fell with his rider to the ground, while many another crushed the foe beneath him in his fall.

Folko flew unwounded through the ranks on his mighty war-horse, followed by a body of chosen knights. Already there was confusion in the enemy's ranks, already Biorn's men were shouting victory, when a body of horsemen led by Eirick himself rushed upon the great chieftain, while his Normans gathered quickly round him to aid him in this new assault. The foot-soldiers crowded on and on in a dense mass, urged forward by the wild piercing war-cry of a new warrior in their midst; and then breaking forth they suddenly spread themselves out on all sides and carried everything before them, even as the burning streams of Hecla burst out of unsounded mountain depths.

Biorn's men, who had been intent upon surrounding the foe, now wavered and weakened and fell before this undreamed of onset. In vain did Biorn strive to stay the stream, he himself was almost carried away in the common flight.

Stark and dumb stood Sintram, looking upon the tumult. Friend and foe passed him by, and all turned away; no one wished to deal with him, so ghastly to behold was he in his silent rage. He struck neither right nor left, the battle-axe rested in his hand. But his piercing eye keenly searched the enemy's ranks to learn what had so turned the tide of battle. And he succeeded. A strange-looking little man in armour, with great golden horns upon his helmet, and a long projecting visor in front, who carried a curved, two-edged blade, stood laughing to scorn the flight of Biorn's men before the conquering Eirick. "That is he!" cried Sintram, "it is he who will put us to flight before Gabriele's eyes." And swift as an arrow, with a scream of rage, he flew towards him. The fight was furious, but not long. To the bold dexterity of his foe Sintram opposed his far greater size, and he dealt upon the horned helmet so terrible a blow that the small warrior fell to the ground, his blood bursting forth, and after a few frightful contortions his limbs stiffened in death. His fall seemed to be the fall of Eirick's hosts. Even those who had not seen his overthrow suddenly lost eagerness and courage, and fell back with uncertain movements, or rushed in wild despair upon the enemy's spears. At the same time had Montfaucon scattered Eirick's horse-

men after a desperate encounter, and with his own hand thrown their chief from the saddle and taken him prisoner. Biorn of the Fiery Eyes stood victor in the midst of the field. The day was won.



ED by the great baron, in the sight of both armies, Sintram with glowing cheeks and modestly bowed head went up the hill where stood Gabriele in the fulness of her beauty. The two warriors bent the knee before her, and Folko said gravely—

"Lady, this young hero of noble blood has to-day deserved the victor's prize. I beg that you will give it with your own fair hand."

Gabriele bowed a kindly greeting, took off her scarf of blue and gold, and knotted it upon a shining sword which a page brought to her upon a silver cushion, and, smiling, she reached the noble gift to Sintram. He was bowing to receive it, when suddenly Gabriele held back, and turning to Folko she said, "Noble baron, shall not he whom

I am to adorn with sword and scarf be first made knight?"

Folko sprang lightly up, bowed deeply before his lady, and after a few earnest words gave the youth the knightly blow. Then Gabriele hung the sword upon him, saying, "For God, and for the honour of pure women! I saw you fight; I saw you conquer, and my inward prayer went up for you. Fight and conquer often, as to-day, that the light of your renown may shine even unto my far-away land."

And on an urgent signal from Folko, she offered the new knight her tender lips to kiss.

Glowing with holy emotion, Sintram rose in deep silence, and hot tears streamed over his cheeks, while the shouts and horns of all the warriors saluted the transfigured youth with deafening clamour.

The old Rolf, however, stood calmly aside, looking at his young lord in silent joyful thanks-giving.

"All feud at last is ended;
The peace of God descended,
The evil foe lies low!"

Lord Biorn and Jarl Eirick were meanwhile talking together eagerly but not in unfriendly fashion. Soon the conquering hero led the con-

quered one up to the baron and Gabriele, saying, "Out of enemies we have become allies, and I pray you, my dear kinsmen and guests, to receive this knight with friendly regard for one who from this time belongs to us."

"We have always been friends," Eirick said, smiling. "It is true that I have sought revenge through him, but, beaten upon water and land, one must at last be content; and thank God I have not fallen ingloriously either before the sea-king in Grecian waters or on Niflung's Heath before you."

To this Montfaucon assented with a friendly clasp, and the truce was made with earnest and heartfelt friendliness.

Jarl Eirick spoke also to Gabriele, and in words so gracious and refined that she looked up at the grey-haired giant in friendly surprise, and gave him her hand.

Sintram was meanwhile speaking earnestly with his beloved Rolf, and they overheard him say at last, "But before everything let the brave and wonderful enemy who was struck by my battle-axe have burial. Seek out the loftiest hill for his resting-place, and the noblest oak for his roof. Also loosen his visor and look closely upon his face, it may be that a sorely wounded man might chance to have a living grave; do this also that

thou mayst be able to tell me what is the appearance of this man to whom I owe this glorious prize of war."

Rolf bowed in friendly acquiescence.

"Our young hero has been asking," said Folko, turning to Eirick, "after a warrior who was stricken down in your ranks, of whom I would like to hear more. Who, my dear lord, was that wonderful chieftain who led your troops so boldly, scarcely even to be stricken down by the heavy battle-axe of Sintram?"

"You ask me more than I myself know," returned Jarl Eirick. "It is only three nights ago that he came to us. I was sitting in the evening with my warriors and men about the hearth; we were forging armour and singing the while. Suddenly above the clang of our hammers and the noise of song there came so deafening a sound to our ears that we all fell silent, and sat as though benumbed. Before long the terrible sound came to us again, and we perceived that it must be the sound of a monstrous horn, blown by someone outside the castle who was anxious to get in. I went myself down to the castle gate, and as I paced the courtyard I found all my dogs so affrighted at the noise that instead of barking they whimpered and sought their kennels. I called to them, but even the boldest would not follow. 'I'll show you

how to behave,' I thought; so, sticking the torch into the ground near me, I took a firm grasp of my sword, and threw wide open the gate, for well I knew that none could enter against my will.

"But a loud laughter greeted me, and the words, 'Hey! hey! What mighty stand is this to take against a single little man who seeks shelter!'

"And I felt somewhat ashamed as I saw the little stranger, and I called him in at once, and offered my hand, which he seemed unwilling to take, and he would not give me his. On going up, however, he became more friendly, and showed me the golden horn in which he had blown. He had another of the same sort, and wore both of them screwed into his helmet.

"Above in the hall he behaved most strangely. By turns he was merry and angry, now courteous and then mischievous, without one seeing any reason for the changes. I should have liked to know whence he came, but as a guest I could not ask him. He only told us that he was frozen with the cold in our country, and that he lived in a much warmer place. He seemed to know a great deal about the city of Constantinople, and told terrible stories of the way in which brother and brother, even father and son, blinded, tortured,

and murdered each other to possess the throne. He told his own name at last; it sounded Grecian, and distinguished, but none of us could remember it.

"Soon he showed himself the best of all sword-forgers. Easily and boldly he worked the red-hot iron, and skilfully formed it into murderous weapons such as we had never heard of. I forbade this finally, for it was my wish to meet you honourably in the field, with equal arms, and such as our Norsemen have always known. Then he laughed, and said that after all one could do without them with dexterous movements, and if I would give him command, victory would be assured to us.

"I thought so good an armourer must be as good an arm-bearer; and for proof he gave such trials of strength, as none could imagine. Although the young Sintram is renowned far and wide as a mighty hero in the ring, yet I can hardly understand how he was able to slay such a one as my Grecian ally."

He would have spoken still further, but the good Rolf came hastily back with some of the men, looking, as indeed they all did, so pale and ghastly that all eyes were turned upon them whilst waiting for the message they bore. But Rolf stood silent and trembling.

"Take courage, my old friend," said Sintram; "whatever it is you have to say, it is truth and light from your lips."

"My lord knight," began the old man, "by your leave, the strange fighter that you have slain we were not able to bury. Ah, if we had never undone the hateful projecting visor! For so frightful a Thing grinned upon us from underneath, so hellishly distorted in death, that we could hardly keep our senses. God help us if we had touched him! Rather send me to kill wolves and bears in the wilderness, and to look at eagles and vultures tearing them."

All shuddered and were silent for a while. At last Sintram aroused himself, and said, "Dear and good old friend, whence come such wild words as I have never heard thee use before? And you, lord Eirick, did your Grecian ally seem in life so horrible to you as this?"

"That I do not know," answered Jarl Eirick, and looked around in the circle of his men that they might bear witness. And now it appeared that neither knights nor men knew how to say exactly what the stranger looked like.

"Then we will find out, and will bury the body ourselves," said Sintram, and he signalled to the whole company to follow him. All of them did

so excepting the baron, who was held at Gabriele's side by her whispered entreaty.

But he missed nothing. For though they searched Niflung's Heath over and over, from end to end, the corpse of the strange warrior was not to be found.

The joyous peace which had come to Sintram in these days seemed to be more than a mere passing sunbeam. If, indeed, at times a thought of knight Paris and Helen made the dreams of his heart more wild and bold, it needed only a glance at the scarf and sword to make the stream of his inward life glide again clear and serene. He often asked himself in silent rapture, "What can a man desire more than is already mine?"

It long remained thus. And now, as the beautiful Norseland autumn began to redden the leaves of oak and elm upon the mountains, he sat with Folko and Gabriele under the trees in the garden, almost in the very same spot where formerly he

had met with that strange creature whom, without knowing why, he had named Little Master. But to-day everything was far different. In silent splendour the sun was going down into the sea, evening breezes with a slight gathering of early autumn mists rose from the fields around the castle. Placing her lute in Sintram's hand, Gabriele said to him—

"Dear friend, so good and gentle as you always are now, I can trust you with my favourite. Let me hear on it that song of yours about the sweet land of flowers. It seems to me it would sound much lovelier with this than with the roaring of your fearful great harp."

The young knight bowed in obedience. Softly and with unwonted tenderness sounded the tones from his lips, and the wild melody seemed to change itself into a song from the gardens of Paradise. Gabriele listened with tears; and gazing into her eyes, Sintram sang in his deep longing with still greater sweetness. As the last notes were sounding Gabriele's voice took up the line like an angel echo—

"Oh, the sweet land of flowers!"

Sintram let fall the lute, and sighed in gratitude upward to the now gathering starlight. Then Gabriele turned to her knight, whispering, "How long, oh, how long it is that we have been far

from our shining castles, and our beloved gardens —'Oh, the sweet land of flowers!'"

Sintram hardly knew whether he had heard aright, so suddenly did he feel himself banished from Paradise. His last hope disappeared before Folko's comforting assurance to Gabriele that he would hasten to gratify the wish of her heart, even as early as the next week, and that the ship lay already on the strand prepared for the voyage. She thanked her knight with a light kiss upon his forehead, and, leaning upon his arm, she turned smiling and singing towards the castle's height. The sorrowful Sintram, nearly turned into stone, remained behind forgotten.

Raging, he at last stood up as the night overspread the heavens, and filled with all his old madness he ran to and fro on the garden paths, and finally dashed wildly out into the grim moonlit mountains. There, with sword in hand, he struck out so wildly that on all sides was heard the noise of crashing and falling branches; the night birds flew screaming in terror about him, and the deer swiftly fled into the deeper wilderness beyond.

Suddenly the old Rolf stood before him. He was coming home from a visit to the chaplain of the Castle of Drontheim, whom he had been joyfully telling of how Sintram had been softened through

Gabriele's sweet presence, how even so healed he had become than one might dare to hope that the evil dreams had departed. And now had his vengeful swinging blade very nearly, unconsciously, wounded the old man. He stood with folded hands, and sighed in deep grief, "Ah, Sintram, thou my foster child,—thou my heart's own blood,—what has come to thee that thou art filled with such furious rage here alone in the forest?"

The youth stood thunderstruck, and looked at his grey-haired friend with sorrowful remembrance; his eyes grew dim like dying watchfires through deep banks of cloud. At last he sighed so lightly as hardly to be heard—

"Thou good Rolf! Thou good old Rolf! go away from me! I am not at home in thy heavenly garden; and if ever kindly airs blow through the golden doorway so that I dare look within at the flowery plains where the dear angels are, directly the icy north-wind storms between, and the grated doors fly shut; and I stand lonely outside in endless winter."

"Knight! dear young knight,—ah, hear me! Listen to the good angel in thy own self! Dost thou not hold in thy hand that same sword that was girt about thee by that pure lady of Montfaucon? Does not her scarf lie over thy raging breast. Dost thou not know how thou hast once

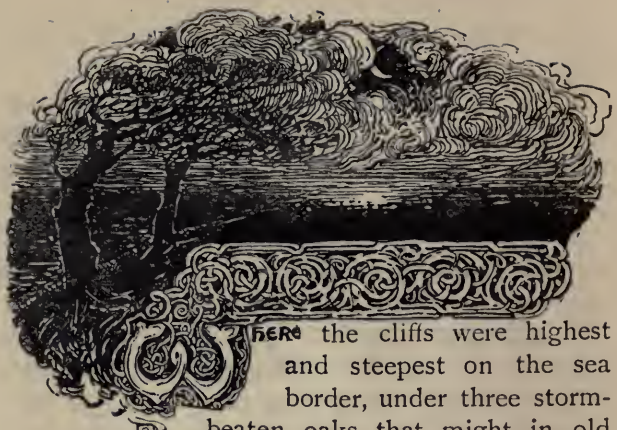
said that no man could wish for more than had fallen to thy lot?"

"Yes, Rolf, I have said that," Sintram answered, and he threw himself down bitterly weeping upon the autumn moss. Tears came also into Rolf's eyes.

But after a time the youth sternly arose, his weeping ceased, and with aspect cold and grim he said—

"Thou seest, Rolf, I have been living still, peaceful days, and I thought that all horrible things had died away from me. It might have been so always if it had been always daytime, if the sun only stood for ever in heaven. But ask this poor over-clouded earth here why she looks so dark; speak to her, that she smile as she did before. Old man, she can smile no more. And now has the silent pitiful moon gone behind the veiling clouds, so that she also can mourn no more. And in the black hour will madness wake up, and every kind of horror. And thou! disturb me not, fret me not! Hurrah! hurrah! In behind there; in behind the pale moon!"

His voice at these last words became only a hoarse cry. Furiously he tore himself loose from the trembling old man, and flew away through the forest. Rolf, weeping, knelt in silent prayer.



Where the cliffs were highest and steepest on the sea border, under three storm-beaten oaks that might in old heathendom have marked a place of human sacrifice, stood Sintram lonely and exhausted, leaning on his drawn sword and gazing out upon the tumult of the sea. He looked like some dread enchanted form in the play of fitful moonbeams through the trees. Suddenly something at his left hand partly raised itself out of the yellow grass, and, moaning and gurgling softly, sank down again; and these strange words passed between Sintram and the unknown Thing—

"Thou there who stirrest about in the grass so uneasily—dost belong to the living or to the dead?"

"As thou likest. To joy and heaven am I dead. To hell and misery, I live."

"It seems to me I have heard thee before this?"

"Oh yes."

"Art thou an unresting spirit,—and is it that thy life-blood was shed as an offering upon this place?"

"An unresting spirit I am, but my blood has no one poured—no one may ever pour. But they have cast me down, oh, into what deepest of abysses!"

"And broken thy neck?"

"I live; and will live longer than they."

"Thou seemest to me like the crazed Pilgrim with the dead men's bones."

"I am not he. But we have had comradeship—yes, almost close friendship. But be it said that I too look upon him as crazed. When I tempt him, and say, '*Take this*,' he reflects and points up to the stars. And when I say, '*Take it not!*' then he gropes and seizes it, and takes to spoiling my best pleasures. But still a sort of brother-in-arms is he; and we are at bottom a sort of kinsmen also."

"Give me thy hand, that I may help thee to rise."

"Oho, my obliging youth! perhaps that might be a bad thing for *you*. But indeed you have really helped me. Take care now!"

Wilder and wilder grew the mysterious struggling upon the ground; thick clouds scurried across moon and stars upon a long, unknown wild journey, and Sintram's thoughts were themselves driven in no less untamed fury in his mind; and there were troubled rustlings and whisperings near and far, in grass and tree. At last a weird creature stood upright. As in affrighted curiosity the moon shot her rays through a cloud-rift upon Sintram's companion, and showed to the trembling youth that it was the Little Master!

"Take thyself off!" he cried. "I will listen no more to thy wicked stories of the knight Paris. I shall be driven mad at last!"

"It does not need stories of knight Paris for that," laughed Little Master. "It is enough that the Helen of thy heart departs for Montfaucon. Believe me, madness has pierced thee through and through. But wouldst thou have her yet remain here? Thou must treat me more politely then."

Thereupon he lifted up his powerful voice angrily to the sea, so that Sintram shrank in dire affright for a moment, and then reproaching himself with cowardice he grasped more tightly his sword-hilt with both hands, and said, "Thou and Gabriele! What knowledge hast thou of Gabriele?"

"Not much," came the answer back; and Little Master began to limp to and fro in angry terror,

saying at last, "The name of thy Helen I cannot bear; and do not keep naming it ten times at a breath! But what if a storm should arise? If the waves should swell and roll themselves in a roaring, foaming ring round about Norway's coast? There would be no more flight to Montfaucon, and thy Helen would remain here for the whole long dark winter at least."

"If! if!" repeated Sintram scornfully. "Is the sea thy vassal? Are the storms thy comrades?"

"Rebels, they unto me! accursed rebels!" growled Little Master in his red beard. "Thou must join with me, lord Sintram, if I am to command them. But thou hast not the courage."

"Boaster! hateful boaster!" cried Sintram. "What is it thou askest of me?"

"Not a great deal, sir knight; nothing at all for one who has power and fire in his heart. Thou hast only for a half hour long to gaze steadily and keenly into the sea, and not cease an instant to will, with all thy strength to will, and ever again to will that the sea should rage, that it should rage and should not calm its fury until the stark winter reigns above your mountains. Then there will be enough to keep Duke Menelaus from his journey homeward. And give me also a lock of thy dark hair, that flies wildly about thy head like the wings of vultures and ravens."

The youth drew his sharp sword, and in frenzy cut off a lock of his hair and threw it to the strange wizard; then he began to gaze with powerful constraining will into the sea.

And softly, quite softly there began a stirring in the waters, as if someone whispered in a dream, and would like to rest, but could not. Sintram was about to refrain, but in the moonlight there appeared a ship with swelling white sheets sailing southwards. Then the fear to see Gabriele also sail away thus came over him, and ever more, and more strongly, did his stern gaze pierce the watery depth.

"Sintram!" one might have said, "Sintram, art thou then really the same who wert so lately looking into the heaven of Gabriele's eyes?"

Then the waves heaved more and more slowly and mightily up, and the storm gathered shrieking and whimpering; already the boiling white caps were to be seen far off under the moon.

Then Little Master tossed the lock of hair up towards the clouds, and as it parted and was swept and driven about the storm wind rose in such fierce anger that sea and sky were lost as in one cloud, and from afar could be heard the anguished cry of many a sinking mariner.

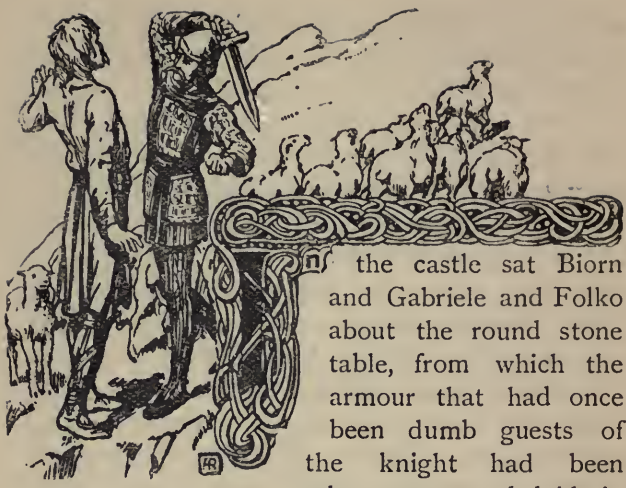
The crazy Pilgrim, with the dead men's bones about him, strangely rose up of a sudden from the

midst of the waves near the shore, giant-like, and fearfully tossing in a boat, which could not be seen for the waters that raged about him.

"Thou must save him, Little Master! Him thou must save!" cried Sintram in angrily imploring voice through the uproar of wind and wave.

But Little Master laughed. "Be easy about *him*, he can soon save himself. The floods will not harm him. Dost thou not see, they are begging of him? they leap up about him, and he gives them rich alms, very rich ones, I assure thee."

It seemed indeed as if the Pilgrim were throwing a few bones into the waves, and so passed over them without harm. Sintram felt a horror creeping through his blood, and fled in wild haste towards the castle. His companion had vanished as dust.



In the castle sat Biorn and Gabriele and Folko about the round stone table, from which the armour that had once been dumb guests of the knight had been taken away and laid in heaps in a chamber near by.

To-day, while the furious storm had shaken doors and windows, the old armour seemed to stir itself in there, and Gabriele started several times in alarm, and fixed her eyes steadily upon the little iron door, fearing that before long some armed ghost must enter bowing its mighty helmet through the low arched portal.

Knight Biorn laughed aloud, and said, as though he had guessed her thought, "Oh, none of those will ever come out,—I have driven them away at last!"

His guests stared doubtfully, and he began,

though with an air of the greatest indifference, for it seemed that the storm had aroused his fierce nature, the following story:—

"Once I also was a happy man. I could laugh as you, and rejoice in the morrow; that was before the time when that hypocrite of a chaplain had so perplexed the wise spirit of my beautiful wife that she went at last into the cloister, and left me alone with my wild boy. That was not well done of the fair Verena.

"Now in her gay and blooming youth, before ever I knew her, many knights sued for her hand; and among them knight Weigand, the Slender, was the one to whom the tender damsel inclined above all others. Her parents well knew that in power and rank he was nearly their equal; so that she was thought of as his affianced bride.

"It chanced one day that walking together in the garden they saw outside its bounds a shepherd driving his sheep up the mountain side. There was a little snow-white lamb leaping merrily about him, and the maiden longed to have it for her own. Weigand hastened after the shepherd and offered him two golden bracelets for the lamb. But the shepherd refused to part with it, and went on upward driving his flock, closely followed by Weigand, to whom he scarcely listened. At last Weigand lost his patience. He threatened, and the shepherd,

strong and proud, as all our Norsemen are, only threatened in turn. Suddenly Weigand's sword descended upon his head; it was meant to fall flat, but who can guide a prancing horse or a naked sword? With sorely wounded head the shepherd fell bleeding into a ravine below, his flock bleating in terror on the mountain. The little lamb in its fear ran into the garden, and laid itself down, sprinkled with its master's blood, at Verena's feet, as if begging for help. She took it in her arms, and after that hour could not suffer Weigand in her sight ever again. She fondly tended the lamb, and had pleasure in nothing else in the world, and grew pale and looked heavenwards like the lilies. She would soon have gone into a convent; but I had been able to come to the help of her father in a bloody war, in which I had saved his life. And when the old man laid this before her, faintly smiling, she gave me her beautiful hand.

"The feelings of poor Weigand would not suffer him to live any longer in his own country. It drove him out on a pilgrimage to Asia, whence our forefathers came; and there it is said that in bravery and humility he has done many wondrous deeds. My heart was strangely softened as often as I heard of him at that time.

"After many years he came back, and wished to

build a church and monastery on the western hills there, from which one can clearly see the walls of my castle. They said that he wished to be himself the priest there, but it fell out otherwise.

"For some pirate ships had sailed up from the southern seas, and hearing tales of this monastery their captain thought he might find much gold with the knight and with the master of his workmen,—or in case they should be able to waylay and carry them off they might extort a monstrous ransom. He must have had no knowledge of Norseland arms and Norseland courage, but he was soon informed of them. Landing in the bay by the black rocks, he crept through a bypath up to the castle and surrounded it with his men. But how Weigand beat about their heads with swords and axes and hammers! They fled swiftly enough to their ships, Weigand raging behind them. The path which he took came by our castle, so that he saw Verena for the first time in many years; and just as she was about to greet him with kindness there flew a heathen dagger hurled backward in flight against his uncovered head. Bleeding and insensible he fell to the ground.

"We completely drove away the barbarians, and then I had the wounded knight brought into my castle, and my pale Verena glowed like lilies in the morning light when Weigand opened his eyes

with a smile at seeing her so near to him. He would go into no other chamber than the little one there where the armour now lies; it seemed to him, he said, like the little cell in his own quiet convent, where he soon hoped to live in his repentance.

"All happened as he wished. My sweet Verena tended him, and at first he seemed on his way to recovery, but his head remained weak and confused by the slightest cause, his step was tottering and uncertain. And I was often sad and angry at heart when Verena's pure eyes rested so gently and tenderly upon him. But I bore it; I would have borne it to the end of all our lives. When, ah, woe is me! Verena went from me into a convent."

He fell so heavily upon his folded hands that the stone table seemed to groan, and he remained long as still as death. When he raised himself again his eyes were flaming with furious wrath, as he glared around the hall. At last he said to Folko—

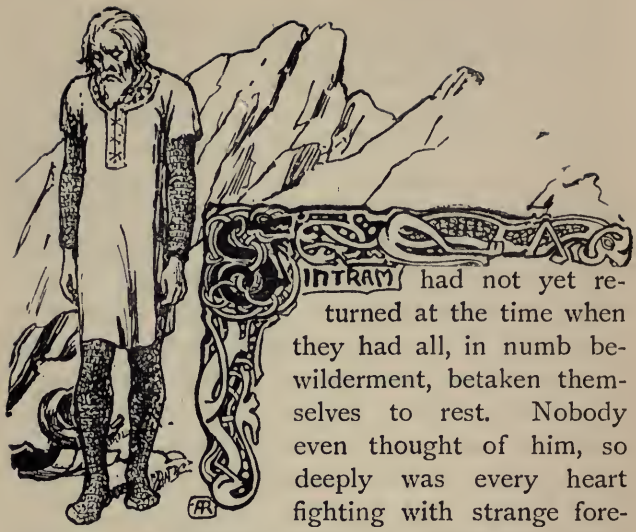
"Your beloved Hamburgers, Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz, they too had much to do with it. Ha! who bid them come to shipwreck here so close to my castle!"

Folko threw a penetrating look upon him, and was about to ask a fearful question, but another

glance at the trembling Gabriele held him mute for the time, and Biorn continued—

"Verena was with her nuns, I was alone. All day long I had been chased by my wild sadness over forest and moor and mountain. I came back in the twilight to my desolate castle, and hardly had I entered this hall when that little door jarred upon its hinge, and Weigand crept towards me. He had slept through everything, and now he asked, 'What has become of Verena?' Then I grew mad, and I grinned, and howled to him, 'She is stricken mad, and I too, and thou too! We are all of us mad!' O God! the wound on his head sprang open again, and a dark stream flowed over his face—ah! with what another red than that with which he met Verena at my castle gate! And he ran raving and stark mad out into the wilderness, and out there has he been wandering about ever since,—a crazy pilgrim!"

He was silent, and Gabriele was silent, and Folko was silent; all three cold and pale as the dead. At last the grim speaker added, in a low exhausted voice, "He has been to see me here since that, but through that little door he comes no more. It is time, is it not, that I have peace here in my own castle?"



had not yet returned at the time when they had all, in numb bewilderment, betaken themselves to rest. Nobody even thought of him, so deeply was every heart fighting with strange foreboding and undefined anxiety. Even the heroic breast of knight Folko heaved in conflict.

Outside sat the old Rolf, still weeping in the forest — his white head heedlessly bare to the storm, waiting for his young lord who had gone in far other paths. Not before the morning light was clear did he come over from the opposite side into the castle. Gabriele had sweetly slumbered the whole night through. It was as though the wings of angels had wafted away the wild story of the past evening, and had brought to her images of flowers, and tranquil seas, and the green hill-

paths of her native land. She smiled tenderly and breathed peacefully, while outside the magic storm flew howling over the forests and waged war with the furious sea.

But when she awoke in the morning and found the casement still rattling, and saw the clouds as if turned into smoke and steam veiling the heavens, she could have wept for fear and sadness; the more so that Folko had already left their chamber, and had, as her maidens told her, gone forth clothed in full armour. At the same time she heard the tread of heavily armed men in the echoing hall outside, and learned that the baron Montfaucon had bidden his warriors to be in readiness to protect his lady. Wrapped in her ermine cloak she looked, in her fear, like a flower sprung from the snow and bending to the winter storm. But presently there entered the baron Folko de Montfaucon in all his glancing armour, the golden helmet with its high waving plumes held peacefully under his arm, and greeted her with cheerful though earnest mien. At a sign from him her women retired from the room, and outside in the hall the armed men could be heard quietly departing.

He led her, comforted by his presence, to a couch, where he sat beside her. "Lady," he said, "will you pardon your knight that he left you for the moment which must have been

an anxious one? but honour called, and stern justice. Now all has ended well, and in peace and kindness. Forget every fear, and all that has disturbed you."

"But you and Biorn?" asked Gabriele.

"Upon my knightly word of honour," said Folko, "all is well."

Then with his usual grace and delicacy, though with an air of studied cheerfulness, he began upon indifferent matters. But Gabriele, deeply moved, embraced him, and said, "O Folko, my hero, O joy of my life, let me know all, if thou mayst. If some spoken word of promise forbids thee, then that is another thing. Thou knowest that I am of the race of Portamour, and would ask nothing of my lord that could throw the least breath of suspicion upon his spotless shield."

Folko gravely reflected for a moment, and then smiled kindly in his lady's face. "It is not that, Gabriele. But wouldst thou be able to bear what I should tell thee? Wouldst thou not sink under it as a slender fir-tree under a weight of snow?"

She lifted her head proudly, and said, "I have just reminded thee of the name of my father, let me add that I am the wife of the lord Montfaucon."

"So be it then," Folko answered, gravely inclining his head; "and what must come to the light of the sun, to which in its dark estate it belongs not, let it come in the least dreadful form—as swift lightning. Know then, Gabriele, that the evil knight who sought to kill my friends Gotthard and Rudlieb was none other than our host and cousin, Biorn of the Fiery Eyes."

Gabriele shuddered for a moment, and covered her face with her hands. Then she looked wonderingly up, and said, "I have not heard aright; although indeed yester eve such a misgiving overtook me. But hast thou not just said that between thee and Biorn all was well, and kindly peace reigned? What! between the fearless knight and such a man,—after such a crime?"

"Thou heardest aright," answered Folko, and he looked with deep pleasure upon the tender and nobly proud lady. "To-day at earliest dawn I went down and summoned him to a fight for life or death in the nearest valley, if he indeed was that knight whose castle was to have been the place of sacrifice for Gotthard and Rudlieb.

"Biorn was already fully armed, and only saying, 'It was I,' he strode with me into the forest. But

when we stood alone together upon the ground, he flung his shield away over a dizzy precipice, then flew his sword likewise, and tearing off with mighty grasp his coat of mail, he cried, 'Now fall to, my Lord Avenger; for I am a heavy sinner and dare not fight with you.'

"How could I strike him? So there was a strange truce between us. He is half my vassal, and yet have I solemnly released him in the name of my friends, as well as in my own, of all debt. He was crushed to earth, and yet no tear came to his eye and not a friendly word to his lips. He is weighed down with the Strong Right that lends me this power over him: Biorn is my vassal for life.

"I do not know, my lady, whether thou wouldst behold us together in this relation; if not, I will seek another castle for our abode. There are none in Norway that would not find it a joy and honour to receive us; and this wild autumn storm may perhaps long defer our homeward voyage. This only I think, if we leave now, and in such a fashion the heart of this savage man would break."

"In whatever place my noble lord stays, there will I also joyfully stay under his protection," Gabriele said.

GABRIELE, with her own tender hands had disarmed her knight, for by her command it was only on the field of battle that the pages dare touch Montfaucon's armour, and was clothing him with his blue-and-gold embroidered cloak, when the door softly opened and Sintram, with humble greeting, came into the room.

At first Gabriele spoke most kindly, as was her wont, but suddenly growing pale, she turned away and said, "For Heaven's sake, Sintram, what is it ails you? How in a single night can you have so altered?"

Sintram stood thunderstruck; he knew not himself rightly what had happened.

Then Folko took him by the hand and led him towards the mirror of a bright shield,

and said earnestly, "Look into this, my young knight."

At the first glance Sintram shrank back; it seemed to him that it was the Little Master with the single crooked feather of his strange headgear that he saw there; but at last he knew that the mirrored image was himself and none other, and that it was the wild cut of the dagger among his locks which gave him so strange, so spectre-like an appearance.

"Who has done that?" asked Folko, still stern and earnest. "And what horror is it that has made your hair to stand on end?"

Sintram knew not what to answer. It was to him as if he stood before a judgment seat—one which had the power to take away his knightly rank.

Suddenly Folko led him away from the shield to the rattling casement, and asked him, "Whence comes this tempest hour?"

Sintram was silent, his limbs shaken; and Gabriele, pale and trembling, whispered, "O Folko! O my knight! What has happened? Tell me, are we then come into an enchanted castle?"

"Our old northern home," Folko answered seriously, "is rich in many a secret art. One cannot therefore name the people wizards, but the

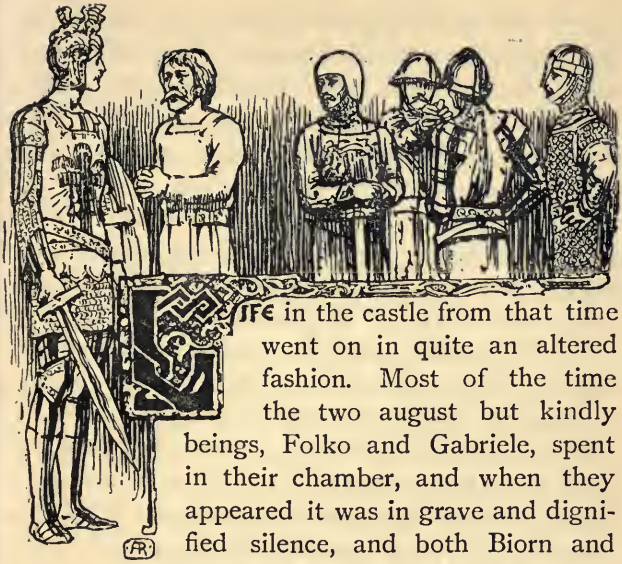
young man there has reason to guard himself narrowly. He whom the devil has seized but by a single hair"—

Sintram heard no more. He groaned, and, staggering, left the room. And outside he encountered the old Rolf, still quite benumbed with the cold and sleet and whirlwinds of the night. Only glad to have his young lord again, he perceived nothing of his altered looks, but as he accompanied him to his room he murmured, "Witches and weather-brewers must be driving their mad way upon the sea! Such violent wind changes come not to pass without devilish arts!" But Sintram sank faint upon his couch, and after Rolf had with difficulty restored him, he had a shield brought to him and regarded himself again. Then with fear and horror he cut off the rest of his long black hair with the sword, so that he looked like a monk.

As he joined the others who were sitting at the midday meal, they all gazed at him astounded; but old Biorn rose in fury and cried, "Wilt thou too be off into a cloister like thy fair lady mother?"

A commanding sign from the baron checked any further outbreak, and he continued, with a forced smile of apology, "I only wondered if it had befallen to him as to Absalom, that he must needs save himself by the loss of his hair."

"You should not jest with holy things," said the now stern baron; and all were silent. As soon as the meal was over Folko and Gabriele, with courteous and earnest greeting, went up to their own apartments.



LIFE in the castle from that time went on in quite an altered fashion. Most of the time the two august but kindly beings, Folko and Gabriele, spent in their chamber, and when they appeared it was in grave and dignified silence, and both Biorn and Sintram stood with timid humility in their presence. Nevertheless the lord of the castle could not bear the thought that his guests should seek the household of any other knight. Once when Folko spoke of it something like a tear came to the eye of the wild knight. He sunk his head, and said in a low voice, "As you will, but for me, I shall be driven out for days upon the cliffs."

So they remained all together; for ever more and more violently raged and tossed the furious

sea, so that no voyage could now be thought of; the oldest man could remember no other such storm in the Norwegian autumn. The priests searched their books of Runic lore, and the bards their songs and sagas, and found no record of any like it.

Biorn and Sintram scorned to heed the stormy weather. During the few hours in which their guests showed themselves were both father and son in the castle, as in reverent service; the rest of the days, and often throughout whole nights, they raged through the forests and rocky valleys, and held savage bear hunts.

Folko meanwhile endeavoured by his gracious manner, and by attentions of all sorts, to make Gabriele forget that she lived in this wild castle, and that the stern northern winter was already upon them to keep them for long months prisoners there. He would tell delightful stories, and play merry airs that Gabriele might dance with her ladies, even sometimes giving his lute to one of them in order himself to mingle in the dancing; and always finding some new way of proving his devotion. Then in the roomy castle halls he would arrange martial exercises for his warriors, in which Gabriele always had some sort of reward for the victor; even himself entering into the circle of combatants, but only to ward off attacks, that

he might not cut any man off from the prize. The Norwegians, who stood as spectators, would compare him with the demi-god Baldur of their saga,—who in play allowed the darts of his companions to be hurled at him, aware that he was invulnerable and conscious of the strength within him.

Once after such an exercise the old Rolf went up to him, and calling him aside, said with friendly humility—

"They call you Baldur, and they are right. But also the beautiful and almighty Baldur was mortal. Take heed to yourself!"

Folko looked at him, wondering.

"Not that I know of any snare," the old man added, "or that I can forebode any disaster. God keep a Norseman from such a dread. But as you stand before me so brilliant and noble there comes powerfully to my mind the perishableness of all earthly things, and I cannot do other than speak. Guard yourself, ah, guard yourself, noble lord! Even the most glorious estate comes to an end."

"Those are good and true thoughts," Folko replied, "and I will surely bear them in mind, thou faithful one."

The good Rolf was indeed often with Folko and Gabriele, and usually made a link between the two

different households. For how could he ever have deserted his Sintram! Only in the wild hunting revels through cold driving tempests he was no longer able to follow his young lord.

The clear stern winter had now come forth in its majesty, and the return to Normandy being definitely given up, the weird storm had ceased. Bright shone in icy whiteness plains and hills, and Folko, with ski on his feet, would sometimes draw his lady in a light sledge as fast as the wind over the crystal-sparkling frozen lakes and streams.

On the other side of the household the bear-hunting of lord Biorn and his son as it became bolder was so much the more joyous and exciting.

It was about this time, when Christmas was nigh at hand, and Sintram sought to drown the fear of his coming dreams by the wildest coursing, that Folko and Gabriele stood together one day upon the castle terrace. It was a mild evening; the snowy land lay beautifully glowing under the rosy touch of late sunlight, and from below there came up to them songs of the old heathen times sung by men who were working at their forge below. At last the song ceased, the beat of the hammer rested, and, without being able to see the speakers or to recognise their voices, they overheard the following words:—

"Which is the boldest and bravest knight among all those who have come of the race of our mighty Fatherland?"

"It is Folko of Montfaucon!"

"Well said! but tell me, is there any one thing from which even this great lord would turn away in fear?"

"Yes, there is indeed something. And it is a thing which we who are at home in Norway find only a delight."

"And that is?"

"A winter bear hunt down the stark icy abysses and over our endless plains."

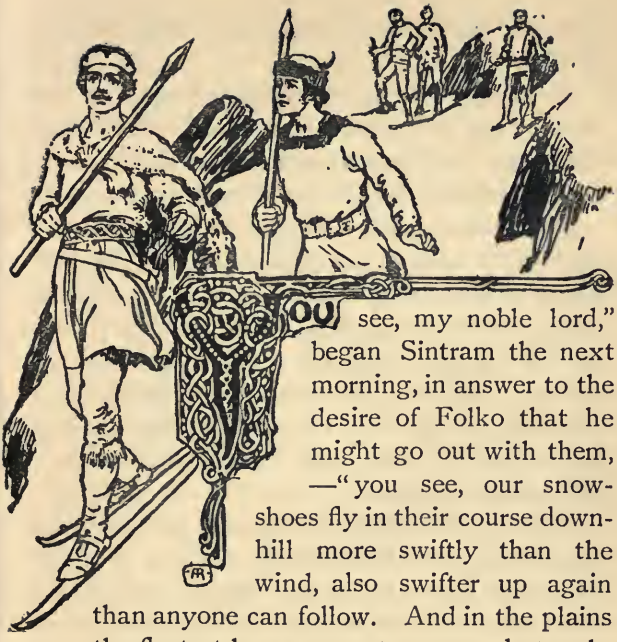
"Well, you say only what is true, comrade. One who cannot bind our snow-shoes to his feet, who does not know how to turn in a moment right or left, he may be mighty among the knights, but from our mountain hunting he had better hold himself aloof and stay in the rooms of his fair wife."

The speakers laughed at this, and then went on with their resounding smithy work.

Folko stood long in thought; some glow other than that of the late evening red of the sky shone upon his cheeks. Also Gabriele mused in deep silence over a nameless something. At last she aroused herself and said, embracing her beloved knight, "To-morrow thou wilt go out with them to

the bear hunting wilt thou not, and bring thy lady the hunter's prize?"

To this the knight joyfully bowed assent, and the rest of the evening was passed in music and dancing.



"You see, my noble lord," began Sintram the next morning, in answer to the desire of Folko that he might go out with them, —"you see, our snow-shoes fly in their course down-hill more swiftly than the wind, also swifter up again than anyone can follow. And in the plains the fleetest horse cannot pursue; but only to the practised master are they of any use. It is as if a Kobold-spirit possessed them, fearfully dangerous to the stranger who has not learned the use of them from childhood."

Folko answered rather haughtily, "Is this then the first time that I have been in your mountain land? Years ago I have enjoyed this sport; and, thank God, there is no knightly exercise which

even without that, I could not easily make my own."

Sintram dared say no more, and still less dared Biorn. But they both felt relieved when they saw with what skill and assurance Folko buckled on the ski without allowing anyone to assist him.

The course was to be after a bloodthirsty old bear which they had long been threatening in vain, and soon after it had begun they were obliged to separate into two parties. Sintram offered himself as the hunting companion of lord Folko, who, touched by the youth's deep humility and devotion, forgot all that had seemed to him mysterious in the pale perplexed face, and graciously accepted.

As they climbed higher up and up into the white mountains, and from many a dizzy peak overlooked far below them the heights and cliffs like the wildest of seas turned suddenly into stone, or rather into ice, Montfaucon's strong breast swelled with pure delight. He sang songs of battle and of love into the sharp blue air—songs of his French home-country far away—and the echo gave them back from cliff and mountain wall; he climbed up and down in joyous play, powerfully making use of his supporting staff, and swinging right and left, lightly at will, so that Sintram's earlier solicitude was changed into astonishment and

admiration; and the hunters, who had been keeping the baron well in sight, had broken out into shouts of applause over the new glory of their guest.

The good fortune which nearly always attended the deeds of the noble Folko seemed here also unwilling to forsake him. After a short search Sintram and he found the certain track of the beast, and, rejoicing, they followed it with such lightning speed that even a winged enemy could not have escaped them. The creature they were seeking, however, was not thinking of flight. Sulkily he lay in a cave of a nearly perpendicular slope not far from the mountain-top, and, angered over the clamour of the hunters, waited in his idle rage only for the first antagonist to venture near enough. Folko and Sintram were now near this rock, while all the others were scattered through the far-stretching wilderness. The track showed itself also above, and the two hunters climbed on opposite sides so that their prey should have the less chance of escape.

Folko stood first on the lonely topmost point and looked about him; a wide distant land of snow stretched, trackless, before him, on its far horizon vanishing into the already gathering clouds of evening. He almost thought he had lost track of his ferocious enemy.

Suddenly there was a growl out of a rocky crevice near him, and huge, black, and unwieldy, the bear lifted himself out of the snow, and standing upright began to move with glaring eyes towards the knight. Meanwhile Sintram was vainly toiling with the constantly sliding masses of snow on the other side.

Glad of a long unwonted, and so almost new, sensation, Folko awaited the attack of the wild beast with levelled spear. He suffered it to come so near him that its fearful paws nearly reached him, and then thrust the spear deep into its breast. But the maddened beast still pressed on with piercing howl, only the cross of the sword holding it upright, and deeply was the knight forced to set his feet in the firm snow to withstand its force and fury, always close before his face the horrible bloodthirsty jaws, and in his ears the growling roar.

At last the rage and onset of the bear grew weaker, the dark blood streamed over the snow, he staggered, and a powerful thrust threw him backward, so that he fell headlong over the precipice.

At that instant Sintram had gained the spot, and Folko, drawing a deep breath, said to him, "But I have not yet the prize in my own hands! and have him I must, since it is I who have won

him. Only the snow-shoe upon my right foot seems loosened; do you think, Sintram, that it still holds well enough for me to slide down the precipice?"

"Let me go, rather than you," said Sintram. "I will bring you up the bear's head and claws."

"A true knight," answered Folko, "does no deed by halves. I only ask you if my snow-shoe will hold."

As Sintram bent down to look, and was about to say that he thought not, a voice close beside them said suddenly, "Why, yes, yes indeed!" Folko, who thought that it was Sintram's voice, glided swiftly away at once, while the youth looked round in terror. Little Master's hateful face met his eye.

As he was about to answer with angry words, the sound of lord Folko's awful fall came to his ears, and he stood still in horror. Below from the abyss there came no sound.

"Now what are you waiting for?" said Little Master. "He has broken his neck; go home now to the castle, and take for your own the fair Helen."

Sintram shuddered. Then his hateful companion began praising the beauty of Gabriele in such enchanted words that the heart of the youth rose in him as never before, and he came to think

of his friend's disaster as having removed the barrier between himself and heaven,—he even turned his face towards the castle.

But a cry was then heard from the depth beneath them. "Help! help! my comrade, help! I am alive, but sorely hurt!"

Sintram's immediate thought was to go down, and he called out, "I am coming!"

But Little Master began: "The shattered Duke Menelaus none can ever help more! And already the fair Helen knows this, and she is only waiting for knight Paris to comfort her!" And with detestable cunning did he so weave in his idle tale with real life, and with praises of the lovely Gabriele, that the dazzled youth, alas! yielded and fled from the spot.

But soon far off he heard the knight's cry once more! "Sintram! knight Sintram! thou to whom I gave that holy rank, hasten and help me! The she-bear comes with her whelps, and my right arm is lamed. Sintram! knight Sintram! hasten and help!"

The cry was lost in the stormy haste in which the two fled from him, and in the evil words of Little Master, who was laughing to scorn the late haughty bearing of Duke Menelaus toward poor Sintram. At last he called out, "Good luck, madam bear! Good luck to you bearkins! with

your jolly feast. You will feed upon the terror of all heathendom, him who has made the Moorish brides to weep, the great lord of Montfaucon! Now you will cry no more, O choice knight! your 'Montjoy St. Denis' before your troops!"

But hardly did this sacred name cross the lips of Little Master than he gave an agonised howl, and twisting and writhing about, wringing his hands, he at last vanished in a whirling snowstorm that was just coming on.

Sintram stood still, leaning upon his staff. As in a strange new world he looked out over the wide snow-plain, the far-off ranges of mountains beyond, and the black fir woods all lying in serene silence. Bowed down under the weight of misery and sin the ringing of a distant hermitage bell fell sadly on his ear. "My mother! my mother!" he cried. "Once I had a dear and tender mother, and I was her good and loving child!"

Then there came to him, as if borne by angels, still a little hope. Montfaucon might not yet be dead! And as lightning flashes he flew back to the precipice, and arriving at the fearful spot he bowed in anguish over the cliff.

The helpful moon shone forth in full splendour, and he could see the knight Folko, leaning as if weak and wounded, half kneeling at the base of a rock. It was plain that his right arm was power-

less, and that he had not been able to draw his sword from its sheath. Nevertheless he had kept the she-bear at bay with threatening mien, so that although she was creeping around, every moment ready for a savage attack, every moment she had been beaten back by the bold attitude of the knight.

"Ah, what a hero had lost his life!" cried Sintram, "and, ah, through whose crime?" But in the next moment there flew a javelin with aim so unerring that the she-bear fell in her blood, and the young ones flew howling away.

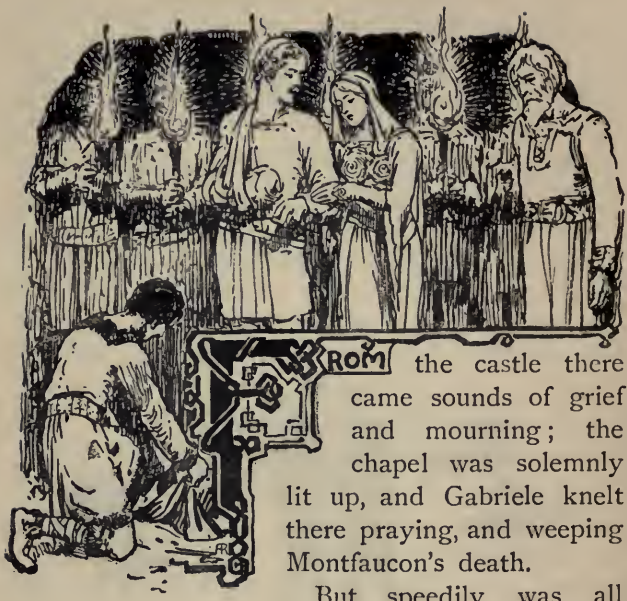
The baron looked up astonished, his face shone in the moon's glimmer grave and peaceful as an angelic presence; he signalled, and Sintram in the haste of deep anxiety reached his side. His first care would have been for the wounded man, but Folko said, "First of all, cut off the head and claws of the bear which I slew—I have promised my dear Gabriele the spoils of the chase. Then come and bind my wounds, for my right arm is broken."

Sintram did as the knight commanded, and when the prey was secure and the broken arm bound up he begged to be led to the castle.

"Ah, my God, if I only dared look you in the face—or if I knew how to come near you!" cried Sintram.

"Thou wert indeed on an evil path," answered Montfaucon very gravely; "but what are we men before God, if it were that repentance helped not? Still it has been thou who hast saved my life, so take courage and comfort."

The youth gently but firmly took the left arm of the knight, and the two went silently together on their way through the moonlit night.



From the castle there came sounds of grief and mourning; the chapel was solemnly lit up, and Gabriele knelt there praying, and weeping Montfaucon's death.

But speedily was all changed when the noble baron, pale indeed, and wounded, but yet out of all danger, stood smiling at the doorway of the sanctuary, and said softly—"Be comforted, Gabriele, and do not mourn for me! By the honour of my race, thy knight still is living."

With what holy joy shone Gabriele's eyes to meet her hero, turning again to heaven with tears—but of deepest gratitude. With the help of two pages

Folko knelt down by her side, and both solemnised their happiness by silent prayer.

As they left the chapel, the wounded knight tenderly led by his lady, Sintram stood outside in the darkness like some wild bird of the night, dark as the heavens above them. Yet he came trembling forth into the light of the torches, laid the bear's head and claws at Gabriele's feet, and said, "These has the noble Folko de Montfaucon won for his lady, the spoils of this day's chase."

The Norsemen gave a cry of joy over the stranger hero who in his first hunting had slain the most magnificent and fierce of animals. Folko looked around the circle with a smile, and said, "Pray do not laugh me to scorn if I now spend a while in my chambers with my good wife."

Then the men who had been speaking together at the forges the day before, came up, and bowing low said to him: "My lord, who could know that in the whole world there is not a single knightly feat in which you are not mighty above other men?"

"The pupil of the old lord Hugh might certainly be trusted," Folko answered kindly. "But now, you brave Norsemen, praise also him who has saved my life; who snatched me from the claws of the bear when I lay by the precipice sore wounded by my fall."

He looked towards Sintram, and the general shout arose anew, while the old Rolf sunk his head with tears of joy.

But Sintram drew back, shuddering. "If you knew," he said, "whom you have before you, your lances would let fly at my heart rather, and that might indeed be best, but that I spare the honour of mine and my father's race, and this time come not to confession. Only so much must you know"—

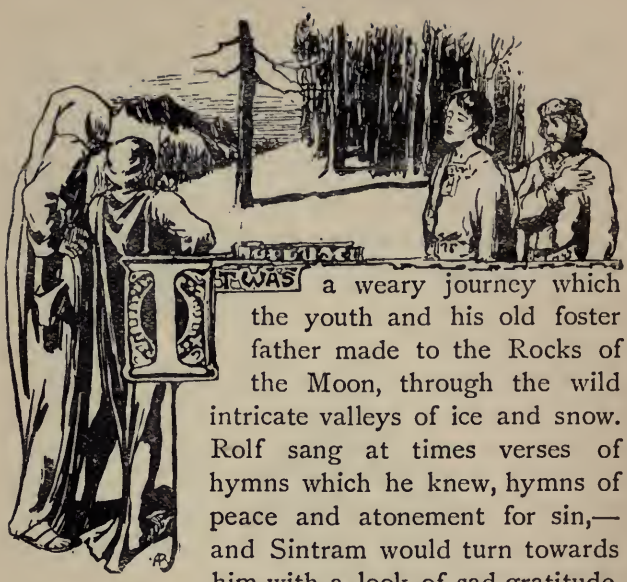
"Youth," interrupted Folko with a warning look, "already so confused! so full of nameless fury! I desire you to be silent about those unreal dreams of yours!"

This command of the knight was at first obeyed, but as he turned smilingly to mount the castle steps, Sintram cried out, "O no! no! thou noblest of heroes! Stop for a moment! I will serve thee in everything heart can desire, but in this one thing I cannot serve. Ye noble Norseland knights, this much must you know. I am no longer worthy to abide under the same roof with the great Folko de Montfaucon and his heavenly wife Gabriele. And to thee, my old father, a good-night, and think of me no more. To the Steinburg on the Rocks of the Moon I now depart, to stay until something shall in some way be changed."

There was a strange meaning in his words

which no one dared to answer, not even Folko. The wild Biorn meekly bowed his head, and said, "Do everything after thy own will and pleasure, my poor son,—for I fear that thou art right!"

Then Sintram strode silently and sadly through the castle gateway, the good Rolf following. Gabriele led the wearied knight to his chamber.



IT WAS a weary journey which the youth and his old foster father made to the Rocks of the Moon, through the wild intricate valleys of ice and snow. Rolf sang at times verses of hymns which he knew, hymns of peace and atonement for sin,—and Sintram would turn towards him with a look of sad gratitude. Other than this no word was spoken.

At last—it was towards the dawning of day—Sintram broke the silence by saying, "Who are those two sitting there by that frozen streamlet, a tall man and a little one? Perhaps they too have been driven out into the wilderness by their own wild hearts. Rolf, dost thou know them? I am afraid of them."

"My lord," said the old man, "your troubled mind deludes you. There is nothing there but a tall fir-tree and a little withered oak-bush, half

snowed up, so that it does look a little strange. But there are no men there."

"But, Rolf, look over there! Look again, right sharply! They are moving, they whisper together."

"My lord, the morning wind stirs the branches, and whispers in the pine needles and the dry yellow leaves, and whirls the snow-drifts."

"Rolf, now they are both coming towards us; now they stand close to us!"

"My lord, it is we who draw nearer to them as we walk; and then the setting moon throws giant shadows far over the valley."

"Good-evening!" said a hollow voice, and Sintram recognised the crazy Pilgrim, near whom stood the hideous Little Master,—more hideous to behold than ever.

"You were right, my lord," whispered Rolf, and stepped back behind Sintram, and made the Sign of the Cross over head and breast.

But the bewildered youth went towards the two figures. "You have always showed a strange pleasure in my companionship," he said. "What do you mean by it? And will you go with me to the Steinburg? You, poor Pilgrim, I will shelter and tend,—but thou horrible Master, thou malevolent dwarf, I will make thee a head shorter for thy work of yesterday!"

"That would be fine!" laughed Little Master. "And perhaps think you had done the world a service! Well, indeed, who knows? Something might be won by it. Only, poor fellow, it is a thing you cannot do."

The Pilgrim meanwhile stood thoughtfully, his head bowed down. "I believe that thou really wouldst have it that I come," he said; "and I wish that I could, but I dare not yet. Have patience a while, and thou wilt surely see me come at a later hour. But first we must once more visit thy father; and thou shalt learn to call me by my name, my poor friend."

"Beware of thwarting me again," threatened Little Master.

But the Pilgrim pointed with his long thin hand to the rising sun, and said, "Hinder thou that sun and me, if thou canst!"

When the first rays lit up the fields of snow, Little Master leaped, muttering, over a cliff. But the Pilgrim, with quiet serious step, went on in the growing light of day towards a cloister that was near at hand, and before long they heard its chapel bell tolling as if for the dead.

"What sort of companions are they whom you have had here, for God's sake?" whispered the good Rolf. "One of them, it seems, cannot bear the light of His beautiful sun, and the other one

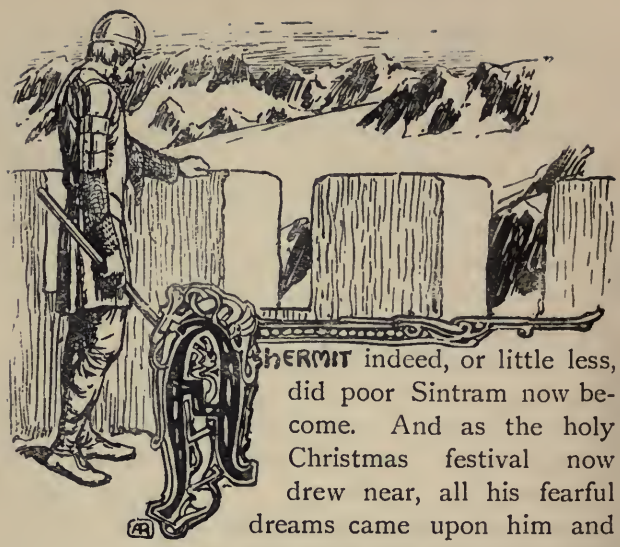
had scarcely reached that shelter yonder when the passing bell tolled his greeting. Has he committed murder?"

"I do not think that," Sintram answered. "He seems the best of the two. It is strange wilfulness that he will not come with me. Did I not ask him in kindness? I think he sings well, and he should have sung soothing songs to me. Since my mother has been in the convent no one sings for me any more."

At these tender recollections tears came to his eyes; yet he hardly knew what he had said, for he was wandering and perplexed in his mind.

They came to the Rocks of the Moon, they climbed to the Steinburg.

The castellan, a sombre old man, all the more devoted to Sintram on account of his own wild and melancholy existence, hastened to lower the drawbridge. Silently they greeted each other, silently did Sintram enter, and the joyless gates fell clashing behind the future hermit-dweller.



HERMIT indeed, or little less, did poor Sintram now become. And as the holy Christmas festival now drew near, all his fearful dreams came upon him and possessed him, this time with such power that the knights and servants fled out of the castle before his shrieks, and ventured not to return. Nobody remained with him but Rolf and the old castellan.

Although the dreams passed, and Sintram grew to be at peace again, he went about haggard and silent, so that he might have been taken for a wandering ghost. No consolation from the good Rolf, no helpful word or holy song might help him more; and the castellan, with his savage scarred face, his head bald from a monstrous

sword cut, and his stolid gloomy silence, seemed like the yet darker shadow of the unhappy knight.

Rolf thought of going out to summon the holy chaplain of the Castle of Drontheim, but how could he leave his lord alone with that sinister castellan, a man who always filled him with secret horror? Biorn had long kept this strange wild soldier in his service, and honoured him for the sake of his rigid faithfulness and steadfast zeal, although neither the knight nor any other person knew whence he came or who he really was. Very few knew how to call him by name, but this mattered not, since he spoke to none. He was only the keeper of the Steinburg on the Rocks of the Moon.

Rolf cast the heavy burdens of his heart upon God, knowing that the merciful God would come to his help, and He came indeed.

For on the holy evening before Christmas the bell of the drawbridge rang, and Rolf looking over the battlements saw the chaplain standing without, in strange company, it is true, for near him was the crazed Pilgrim, the white bones on his dark mantle gleaming grimly in the glimmering starlight. But the chaplain's presence filled the old Rolf with too much joy to give any room for doubt. "Whoever it may be that comes with *him* is welcome," he thought. And so he quickly let them both in with respectful greeting, and

led them up into the hall where Sintram under the light of a single flaring torch sat stiff and pale. Rolf was obliged to support the Pilgrim on his way upstairs, for he was benumbed with the cold.

"I bring you a message from your mother," said the chaplain.

A sweet smile lit up the young knight's face, into which also a faint colour had stolen.

"Ah, God! does my mother still live?" he said, "and does she know of me?"

"She is gifted with high and wonderful power of foreshadowing the things that are to be," said the chaplain. "She knows what things you will do, and what leave undone. All is mirrored before her, half-sleeping, half-waking, unerringly. She knows of your deep trouble, and she sends me, who am her father confessor, here to bid you be of good cheer; but at the same time to warn you. For, as she avers, and as I believe, there stand yet many and strangely heavy trials before you."

Sintram bowed himself with arms crossed over his breast, and said, gently smiling, "Much has been vouchsafed me, more than in my boldest hours I could have hoped; a thousand times more through my mother's greeting, and through your coming, reverend sir. And all this after a more deep and terrible fall than I had ever had before.

The mercy of the Lord is great, and no matter what burden of penance or trial He may send, I hope with His help to bear it."

At this moment the door opened and the castellan entered with a torch, the red light of which coloured his face as with blood. He gave a terrified look at the crazed Pilgrim, who upon seeing him had fallen back upon his seat in a swoon, supported by Rolf. Then he stared in astonishment at the chaplain, and at last he said in a low voice, "I believe—I believe that the hour of confession and of atonement has now come!"

"I also believe it," said the priest, who had caught the low whisper. "This seems to be a day of silent blessing. The poor man there whom I found half-frozen in the snow would rather have made me his confession than have followed me under this sheltering roof. Do thou as he has done; do not put off thy good purpose a moment longer." So saying, he left the hall in company with the castellan, commending the still unconscious Pilgrim to the care of the knight Sintram and of Rolf.

As soon as from their ministration he at last opened his eyes, Sintram said, with a kindly smile, "You see that you have come to visit me, after all. Why did you put me off a few nights ago when I so heartily begged you to come? I may perhaps have spoken too suddenly, and alarmed you."

A terrified look was even now upon the Pilgrim's face, though he looked up at Sintram with friendly humility. "Oh, my dear, dear lord," he said, "I am devoted to you beyond all words. But never speak of things that have passed between you and me,—it gives me a great fear. For, my lord, either I am mad and have forgotten everything, or else there is someone who has met you in the forest that is not I, but seems as like to me as a twin brother, who is however mightier than I."

Sintram softly silenced him, and said, "Speak of it no more. I too will be silent, with all my heart." Both Rolf and he shivered, though they hardly knew why the mysterious words of their guest should be terrifying to them.

After a short silence the Pilgrim said, "I would rather sing you a song,—a song of comfort and peace. Is there a lute at hand?"

Rolf brought one to him, and half raising himself on the couch he sang these words—

"Him, who unto death is drifting
Slow in failing heart and limb,
And lifting,
Hand and soul in faith uplifting
To the Mercy Seat,
Him the Lord heareth; him
Death with friendly hand shall meet.

See ye in the east the sparkling?
Hear ye not the angels singing
In the rising morning's dawn?
Love and mercy bringing.
Unto you, so long in darkling
Fear and anguish, cometh on,
Soft, the light of death.

Him, who unto death is drifting
Slow in failing heart and limb,
And lifting,
Hand and soul in faith uplifting
To the Mercy Seat,
Him the Lord heareth; him
Death with friendly hand shall meet."

"Amen!" said Rolf and Sintram. And while the last chords were still resounding, the chaplain and castellan came slowly and quietly into the room together.

"I bring a precious Christmas gift," said the chaplain. "In a noble soul, long astray and heavy laden, there has come at last reconciliation and peace of conscience. To thee, dear Pilgrim, he speaks; and thou, Sintram, take comfort to thyself from another's trust in God."

"More than twenty years ago," began the castellan, at a signal from the priest, "I tended my flocks, a bold shepherd on the mountain pastures. There a young knight once came to me, they called him Weigand the Slender; he wished

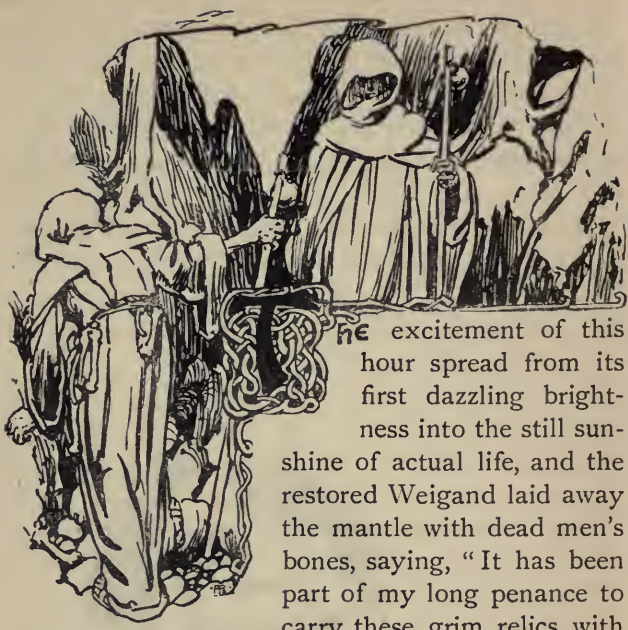
to buy of me my favourite pet lamb as a gift to his fair lady, and offered me much gold in payment. I scornfully refused. Over-bold youth stirred in both of us, and a stroke of his sword hurled me senseless down into a gorge of the mountains."

"Not dead?" asked the Pilgrim, almost inaudibly.

"I am no ghost!" said the castellan, with impatient gesture; but after a serious look from the chaplain he went on with more humility: "I recovered slowly and in solitude by the use of remedies that it was easy for me, a shepherd, to find among the herbs of our valleys, and as I came back to life, no one with my scarred countenance and now bald head knew me any longer. I heard a report in the country that, owing to this deed of his, knight Weigand had lost his beautiful bride Verena, and that he had pined away; while she would have taken the veil, but that her father had over-persuaded her into a marriage with the great knight Biorn. Then there came a dreadful thirst for revenge into my heart, and I disclaimed my name, my relations, and my home, and entered into the service of Biorn as an unknown stranger, so that the Slender Weigand might ever remain the murderer he was thought to be, and that I might batten upon his remorse, upon his dreary return home, upon his madness. But to-day," and

the tears now came to his eyes, "to-day God has broken the hardness of my heart; and my dear lord Weigand, hold yourself no longer a murderer, and tell me that you will pardon me, and pray for one who has done you so grave and deep a wrong and"—

Here sobs prevented his words. He sank at the feet of the Pilgrim, who embraced him with words of pardon.



The excitement of this hour spread from its first dazzling brightness into the still sunshine of actual life, and the restored Weigand laid away the mantle with dead men's bones, saying, "It has been part of my long penance to carry these grim relics with me, in the thought that some of them might have belonged to the man whom I had murdered. I sought for them on the mountains, in the deep beds of streams, and in the high nests of eagles. And in my wanderings it seemed sometimes to me, though it might have been a delusion, that I met sometimes a personage who was very similar to me, only that he was far, far more powerful, although still more pale of face and wasted in frame."

A beseeching sign from Sintram silenced these words. With a gentle smile he went on to say, "You know now what is the deep, the unspeakably deep sorrow that has preyed upon me. Both my fear of you and my love for you are no longer unexplained to your kind heart. For, young man, however much you are like your fearsome father you have also your mother's loving kindness, and its reflection shines upon your pale, strong features like the morning's glow upon icy mountains. How long is it that you have been alone to yourself, amidst the crowds of men? And how long since you have seen your mother, my poor, beloved Sintram?"

"There has come to me, too, as it were a spring of water in a parched wilderness," said the young knight; "and perhaps if I could have you always with me, my dear lord, I should be healed entirely. But I have forebodings that you will soon be taken from me."

"I think, indeed," said the Pilgrim, "that the song I have just sung is nearly my last, and that a very near prophecy is upon me. Ah! how the soul of man is forever arid ground; and the more God gives of His blessings the more imploringly do we look for new gifts. I would beseech one thing more of Him before my end.

But it will never be mine. For of such a high gift am I all too unworthy."

"It shall indeed be yours," said the chaplain joyfully. "He that humbleth himself shall be lifted up, and I may well now be permitted to lead one who is absolved from crime into the presence of Verena, for her tender and forgiving farewell."

The Pilgrim clasped his hands, with an unspoken prayer of gratitude in his eyes. But Sintram looked sorrowfully down, and sighed to himself, "Ah! if one might dare"—

"My poor, good Sintram," said the chaplain, "I understand thee,—but for that it is not yet time. Still may the powers of evil raise their angry heads, and Verena must restrain thy longing and her own until thou art pure in heart as she. But be comforted that God inclines Himself to thee, and that the longed for joy will come,—if not in this world yet surely beyond."

But the Pilgrim, as if waking from an ecstatic vision, now rose from his seat, and said, "Will you not go forth with me, my lord chaplain? Before the sun is up we might reach the convent gates, and I be more near to heaven."

In vain the chaplain and Rolf tried to persuade him of his weakness; but he, smiling, would not hear a word, and girding himself for

the journey, set the lute in tune, begging that it might accompany him. His determination conquered all remonstrance, and the chaplain had also arisen and addressed himself to the journey, when the Pilgrim, looking tenderly upon Sintram, who had fallen into a light sleep, said, "Wait still a moment, I know that he would fain hear me sing once more." And he lightly touched the harp—

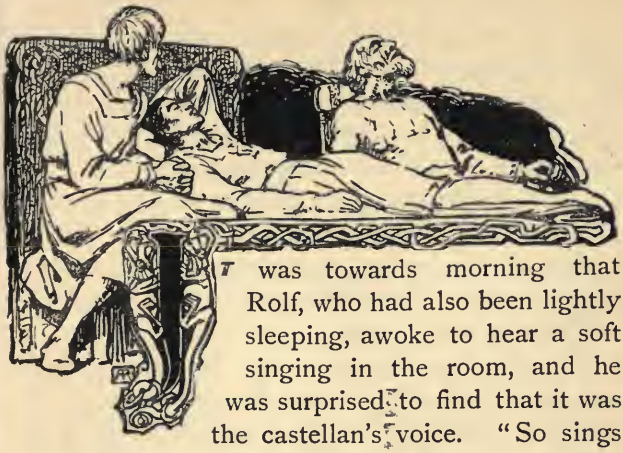
"Sweet boy, sleep thou in peace,
Thy mother o'er thee bends;
And love that cannot cease
And holy song she sends,
And prayeth still afar
For the eternal grace,
Though the days not yet are
When she may see thy face.

And in thy waking hours,
When she is with thee still,
Let thy God-given powers
Bow down to know her will;
When mazed temptations gleam
Heed thou her yea and nay;
Though dim the clue may seem
Thou shalt not lose thy way.

Oh, wondrous might she sends!
Oh, holy light of life!
What peace of heaven transcends
The power of hell-born strife

Sleep thou in peace, sweet boy,
This song thy mother dear
Has woven for thy joy
Into thy dreaming here."

Sintram, breathing lightly and with a smile on his face, had fallen into deepest slumber.



It was towards morning that Rolf, who had also been lightly sleeping, awoke to hear a soft singing in the room, and he was surprised to find that it was the castellan's voice. "So sings lord Weigand now at the convent gate," the castellan said, as if explaining, "and the gates open kindly to receive him."

Then Rolf fell asleep again, uncertain whether this had passed in waking moments or in his dreams. But after a time the clear sunshine waked him anew, and looking up he saw the countenance of the castellan as if transfigured in the morning light, and the features once so repellent changed to a kindly, almost a sweet, expression. And the strange man seemed as though he were listening in the still air to glorious music, or to words of lofty meaning; and when Rolf was about to speak he made an entreating gesture, still keeping his rapt, listening attitude.

At last he sank slowly, and as if satisfied, upon his seat, whispering, "Thank God, she has granted him his last, most earnest wish. He will be laid in the cloister graveyard; and now he has forgiven me indeed, from the depth of his heart. I can say to you that he has found a most blessed and peaceful end."

Rolf did not dare to question him, nor to awaken his young lord. It was to him as if the departed had spoken also to him.

The castellan remained long silent, with a smile still upon his face. At last he arose and seemed again to listen, saying, "It is over! the bells are very sweet. We have overcome! Ah, how light and sweet does our dear Lord make it to us!"

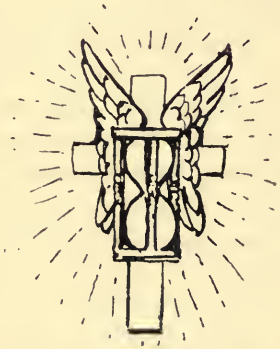
And so it was indeed. He leaned back as if awearied, and his soul was set free from his long-troubled frame.

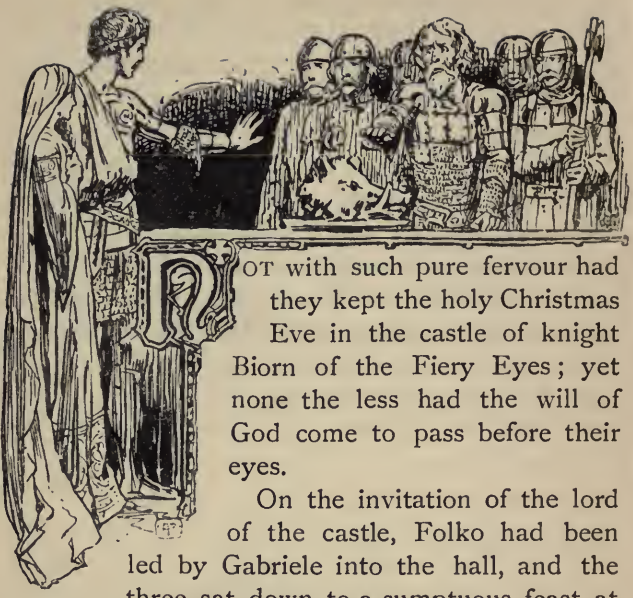
Rolf now gently woke his young lord, and showed him the form of the peaceful dead. Sintram smiled, and the good Rolf sank upon his knee in prayer for the departed soul. Then he arose and bore the cold body into the vault, and waited there with consecrated candles the return of the chaplain. That the Pilgrim would come no more he well knew.

It was towards noon when the chaplain returned, and he could only confirm what was already

known to them. He told how Weigand had fallen asleep, like a tired child, while Verena in silent tenderness had held the crucifix before him; and he added a greeting full of hope from his mother to Sintram.

"So may the Lord be good to us," sang the youth softly to himself; and they made ready the last resting-place for the quiet dead, where with all due rites he was solemnly laid. The chaplain was now obliged to depart, but in the farewell moment he was able to say the friendly words, "Thy dear mother well knows the calm and beautiful spirit that now is thine."





NOT with such pure fervour had they kept the holy Christmas Eve in the castle of knight Biorn of the Fiery Eyes; yet none the less had the will of God come to pass before their eyes.

On the invitation of the lord of the castle, Folko had been led by Gabriele into the hall, and the three sat down to a sumptuous feast at the round stone table. On either side there were great dining-tables where sat the men belonging to both knights, clad, as was the Norseland custom, in full armour. The lofty hall blazed with countless lamps and candles.

As the time drew on to the solemn hour of midnight, Gabriele softly warned her wounded knight to withdraw; and Biorn, perceiving this, said, "You are right, fair lady; our hero needs rest. Only let

us first accord its right to one more old and honourable custom."

And on a sign given by him there was borne into the hall by four knights, and placed upon the table, a great boar's head that looked as though it were of pure gold.

Biorn's men reverently arose, taking off their helmets, as did the lord himself.

"What may that mean?" Folko asked very seriously.

"What thy fathers and mine have always done on every Yule festival," answered Biorn. "We will now make our vows over Freya's boar, and round the solemn cup thereon."

"What our ancestors called the Yule feast we keep no longer," said Folko; "we are good Christian knights, and celebrate the holy Christmas feast."

"To do the one, and not to leave the other undone!" cried Biorn. "My forefathers are too dear to forget their heroic customs. Who wills it otherwise may follow his own counsel, but that shall not hinder me." And forthwith stretching out his hand, he began: "I swear by this golden boar's head"—

But Folko called out, "Forbear, in our holy Saviour's name! Where I am, and still draw breath, and have my will, there shall no more

heathen customs be solemnised without let or hindrance."

Biorn looked at him angrily. The men of both knights, with a hollow clank of armour, formed themselves into groups on opposite sides, each behind its leader. Already here and there a visor was fastened.

"Bethink thee yet what thou doest!" said Biorn. "It was my wish to swear on the boar's head a faithful alliance—yea, even grateful vassalage—to the house of Montfaucon. But if you disturb me in this the custom that has come down to me from my fathers, then give heed to your life and to all that is dear to you. My anger knows no limits more."

Folko made a sign to the pale and terrified Gabriele to draw back behind his men, and then said to her, "Courage and cheerfulness, noble lady. Many a weaker Christian than I has for the sake of God and the holy Church done more than that which stands before me to-day. And, believe me, the baron of Montfaucon is not so easily overcome."

Gabriele retired as Folko bade, in a measure reassured by his fearless smile, but this smile inflamed still more the anger of the castle's lord. He stretched his hand once more towards the boar's head, and was about to utter a terrible vow,

when Folko snatched the gauntlet of Biorn from the table, and with his left arm smote the gilded image so powerful a blow that it flew into halves, and fell crashing on the ground. Lord Biorn and his men stood as if petrified. But soon mailed hands rattled upon swords, shields were taken down from the wall, and an angry threatening growl filled the hall. At a sign from Folko one of his faithful men reached out a battle-axe to him, with his left arm he swung it high and powerfully, and stood like an avenging angel in their midst, as with stern calmness he spoke these words—

"What will ye, deluded Norsemen? And you, sinful Biorn? You are indeed become pagans; and I hope to prove to you, armed men, that not only in the strength of my right arm it is that God gives me power of victory. And hear me, if you yet can hear! On this same accursed boar's head, now by His help shattered, didst thou, Biorn, lay thy hand and swear to put to death such men from the seaports of Germany as might fall into thy power. And Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz came, driven upon your coast by a stormy sea. What didst thou then, O savage Biorn? What did ye others who held the Yule feast with him? Seek to harm me as you may, the Lord will be with me as he was with those godly men."

And turning to his warriors, "All to arms!" he

said, "and let Gotthard and Rudlieb Lenz be our battle-cry!"

Then sank Biorn's drawn sword, then were his warriors still, and not an eye was raised from the ground among them. One after another they softly left the hall, and at last only Biorn stood before the baron and his men. He seemed hardly to notice the desertion, but sank upon his knee, reached his shining blade toward the destroyed image, and said, "Do with me as thou hast done with that. I have deserved nothing better. Only one thing do I implore you: bring not upon me the disgrace, great baron, of leaving my castle for any other in Norway."

"I do not fear you," answered Folko, after some thought. "And, as far as can be, I willingly pardon you." Therewith he made the Sign of the Cross over the wild form of Biorn, and left the hall with Gabriele. The men of the house of Montfaucon strode, proud and silent, after him.

Now was the hard spirit of the grim lord of the castle indeed broken, and with still greater humility did he wait upon every look and gesture of Folko and Gabriele. They, however, more and more withdrew themselves into their own apartments, where still, in the midst of the stern icy northern winter, there bloomed a joyous May. The wounded state of their lord did not hinder

the evening entertainments of music and song and story; rather was a new and delightful feature added in the presence of this noble knight leaning upon his charming lady, exchanging as it were each other's offices as they paced the brilliantly lighted halls, strewing greetings as flowers among the assembled men and women.

Of poor Sintram was little or nothing ever said more. The last wild scene with his father had increased the horror with which Gabriele remembered the self-accusing words of the young knight, and even because Folko was inflexibly silent on the subject was the presence of some terrible mystery more certain. Even the baron secretly recoiled when he thought of the pale dark-haired youth. His repentance had bordered upon fixed despair, and no one knew what he was now doing in that gloomy castle of Steinburg upon the Rocks of the Moon. There were mysterious rumours that the Evil Spirit had now entirely overcome Sintram, and that no one could live with him any more; even the strange dark castellan having paid for his faithfulness with his life.

Folko was hardly able to cast aside the fearful suspicion that the lonely youth had become an evil magician.

Well might it be that spirits of evil did gather about him, but it was without his calling them.

It seemed to him often in dreams as if the wicked enchantress Venus in her golden chariot drawn by winged cats hovered over the battlements of the Steinburg, crying with mocking laughter, "Foolish Sintram, foolish Sintram! hadst thou followed Little Master thou wouldst now be in Helen's arms, and the Rocks of the Moon would be the Rocks of Love and the Steinburg would be the Rosenburg. Thou thyself would lose thy dark hair and pallid hue, — for thou art now but bewitched, my boy,—and thine eyes would shine more softly, and more golden be the hair over thy blooming cheek, than even that of Paris, admired of all the world. Oh, how Helen would have loved thee!" Then she showed him, too, in a magic mirror, a semblance of Gabriele with softly glowing cheek, and himself in his beautiful knighthood kneeling at her feet. When he arose out of such visions he would seize with anguished haste that sword and scarf once given by the lady, as a shipwrecked mariner seizes the fragments about him, and would shed hot tears, and whisper to himself: "But I have had one hour in my poor life in which I was worthy, and happy!"

Once he arose at midnight from such dreams, and this time filled with a penetrating horror; for it seemed to him as though the fair enticing face of the enchantress Venus was distorted towards

the end of her speech, with the wonderful scorn in which she surveyed him, so as to exactly resemble the hideous Little Master.

The youth knew no better how to still his troubled mind than with Gabriele's sword and scarf over his shoulder to hasten out under the solemn, shining stars of the winter heaven. Among the leafless oaks, the snow-laden firs that stood by the high castle wall, he walked to and fro in deep thought.

Suddenly he was aware of a sound that seemed to come from the moat, a distressed voice as of one who wished to sing but was choked by inward sobs of grief. To Sintram's call there was no reply, and silence reigned; but as he began to walk on, the cry arose again,—a frightful gasping and moaning, as if from one at the point of death.

Conquering the horror which seemed to hold him back as by the hair of his head, Sintram climbed silently down into the dry rock-hewn moat. When he was so far down that the stars no longer lighted his way, beneath him stirred a shrouded figure, and he slid suddenly down the last steep rock with unwilling haste into its presence. Instantly the moaning ceased, and a wild maniac peal of laughter broke forth from under the folds of a wide cloak: "Hoho, my

comrade! hoho, my comrade! a little too quick for thee that last! Now, thou seest thou standest no higher than I do, my pious, painstaking youth. But bear, bear it patiently!"

"What dost thou want of me? Why dost thou laugh? Why dost thou weep?" asked Sintram angrily.

"I might ask the same of thee," answered the creature of darkness, "and thou wouldst be far less able to answer me than I thee. Why dost thou laugh, and why weep? Poor fellow! but I will show thee a very remarkable thing in thy castle that thou knowest nothing about. Now look closely;" and the awkwardly shrouded figure began to scratch and bestir itself about the stone work until a little iron door came to light, opening into a black passage that led into some endless depth.

"Wilt thou come with me?" whispered the strange being. "This goes straight to thy father's castle by the nearest way. In a half-hour we shall come out of the floor into the apartments of thy beautiful lady; Duke Menelaus will be lying in a magic slumber,—I will take care of that. And then thou shalt take the tender figure in thy arms and bear her here to the Rocks of the Moon, and all will be won over again which through thy earlier misgivings seemed for ever lost."

Sintram trembled visibly with the mighty strife of conscience; but at last, pressing sword and scarf to his heart, he cried out, "Oh, hour most beautiful, most sacred of all my life! Let all other joy be lost, that glorious hour will I hold fast!"

"A beautiful glorious hour, indeed!" laughed the voice from under its hiding folds. "Dost know, then, who it is that thou hast thwarted? A good old friend, a friend that only shows himself so quarrelsome to give thee the glory of conquering him. Wilt thou be convinced? Wilt look?"

The dark robe fluttered back from the little figure, and the dwarfed warrior in strange armour with golden horns upon his helmet whom Sintram thought he had slain upon Niflung's Heath stood before him, laughing, "Thou seest now, my young fellow, that in the whole world there is nothing but dream and foam! Hold fast the dream that refreshes! swallow the foam that delights! Into the underground passage with thee! It leads up to the angel Helen. Or wouldst thou know still better thy friend?"

The visor flew up, and the ever hideous face of Little Master stared at the knight.

Half in a dream, Sintram said, "Art thou not also that evil enchantress, Venus?"

"I am a part of her!" laughed Little Master; "or perhaps she is a part of me. But set about getting

thyself disenchanted, and changed back into the fair prince Paris. Then, O prince Paris!" and here his voice was as an enticing song,—"then, O prince Paris, shall I be as fair as thou."

At this moment the good Rolf appeared above upon the rampart, and in seeking the young knight, whom he had missed, the light of the consecrated candle in his lantern lit up the deep moat. "Lord Sintram, in God's name what have you to do with the ghost of that form whom you slew upon Niflung's Heath, whose corpse I was never able to bury?"

"Dost thou see then? dost thou hear then?" whispered Little Master, drawing himself back into the darkness of the passage. "That wise man up there knows me well enough. Thy hero deed comes to nothing! Fling thyself into the joy of life."

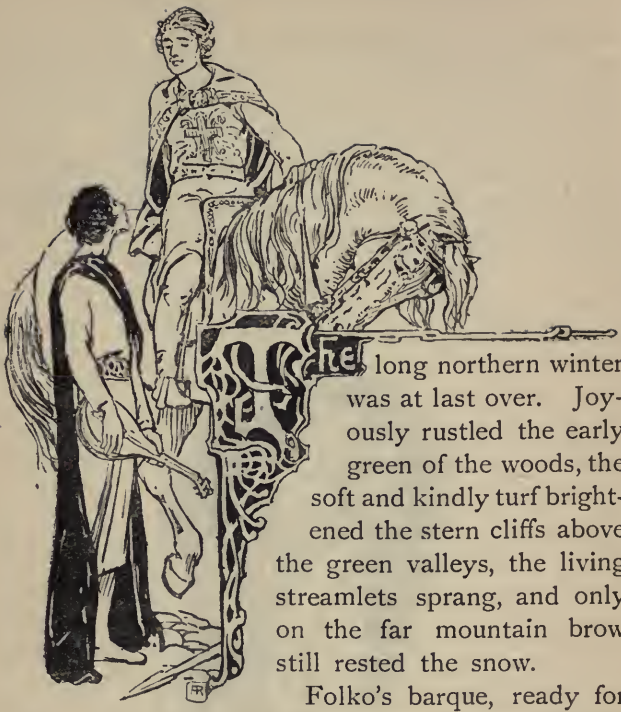
But with a powerful effort Sintram sprang into the bright circle which the lamp made from above, and cried out boldly, "Depart from me, restless fiend! I know that I bear a name in which thou darest claim no part."

Frightened and furious, Little Master leaped into the passage, yelling as he slammed the iron door behind him. Within they could hear him still groaning and gasping.

Sintram climbed the wall of the moat, and

signed to his old foster father to be silent. He said only, "One of my greatest joys—yes, the greatest joy which I had—has been taken from me. But through God's help I am not yet lost."

On the morrow, in the glimmer of earliest dawn, Rolf walled up the door of the perilous passage with mighty blocks of stone.



The long northern winter was at last over. Joyously rustled the early green of the woods, the soft and kindly turf brightened the stern cliffs above the green valleys, the living streamlets sprang, and only on the far mountain brow still rested the snow.

Folko's barque, ready for the approaching voyage, stood on the sunlit sea. The baron, now wholly recovered, strong and fresh as though nothing had ever repressed his heroic might, stood one morning upon the shore with his lovely wife. In joyful anticipation of their return, the noble pair were watching the men busily engaged in lading their vessel.

Above the confused sound of their talk, one voice arose clearly to their ears: "But what to me seems most strange and fearsome in all this northern land, is the Steinburg on the Rocks of the Moon. It is true I never went into it, but in hunting, when I saw it towering up above the fir-tops, it seemed as if something unspeakable must have its abode there. A few weeks ago, when the valleys were still snow-bound, I came out unawares quite near the weird place, and saw the young knight, Sintram, walking all alone upon the ramparts like the ghost of a departed hero, making melancholy music upon his lute with an air of deepest sadness."

The speaker's voice was overborne by other noises, and soon he had reached the ship with the bales he had been fastening. Folko and Gabriele heard no more.

The sweet lady looked at her knight with tearful eyes, and said, "Is it not over by those mountain peaks that the lonely Rocks of the Moon lie? I am sad at heart for poor Sintram."

"I understand thee, pure and gracious lady, and the tender impulse of thy heart," Folko said; and at once ordering his swift Arab to be brought him, and commending his lady to the care of his followers, he set forth into the valley which led to the Steinburg, accompanied by Gabriele's grateful smile.

He came upon Sintram sitting gloomily near the drawbridge, a lute in his hand, with the look of deep sadness which the speaker upon the strand had described. It had just then seemed to the young knight that a cloud shadow had passed above him, and he had looked up, thinking to see a flight of cranes in the air. But the heavens were empty; and then, in wonder, he saw that from the battlement of the armoury tower there had fallen a great beautiful spear at his feet. And a voice whispered to him: "Take it up! Drive it home! Thy enemy is near; thy dearest happiness is vanishing." And he seemed to see the shadow of Little Master glide into a cleft of the rocky moat beneath him.

At the same time there drew a giant gaunt figure through the valley, in the likeness of the dead Pilgrim, only vaster far, that lifted its long bony threatening arm and then sank into an ancient vault.

Just at this same moment, swift as the wind, came the knight Folko up to the Rocks of the Moon; and he too must have seen something of these strange apparitions, for as he came to a stop beside Sintram, he looked pale, and said in a low and serious tone—

"Who were those two with whom you were just occupied, my lord?"

"That only the dear God knows," answered Sintram,—"for I know not."

"If only the dear God does know," cried Montfaucon. "But I fear He knows of you and your doings very little more."

"You are speaking terrible words," said Sintram. "Yet since that awful evening—yes, since earlier days than that—must I suffer all possible things from you. My dear lord, you may believe me, I do not know these horrible companions; I do not call them, I know not what awful curse calls them to my heels. Meanwhile I am hoping that the loving God does know me, as a shepherd cannot forget the poorest lamb that has strayed away, and is now calling after him with anxious voice in the dark wilderness."

Then the anger of the baron was broken indeed. Tears were in his eyes, as he said, "No! most surely has thy God not forgotten thee;—only forget thou not the loving God. Also, I did not come to chide thee. I came to give thee a blessing in my own and Gabriele's name. The Lord protect thee, the Lord lead thee, the Lord lift thee up. And from the far-off coast of Normandy will I look after thee, Sintram, and will learn how thou strivest with the evil that besets thy poor life. And when thou hast shaken it off, and standest a noble victor over the curse of Sin and Death, thou shalt receive from

me a reward, a pledge of my love more precious than either thou or I can at this moment know."

These words came from the lips of the baron as a prophecy; he understood but half of what he said. With a warm friendly farewell greeting he turned his noble steed and flew down the valley way unto the shore.

"Fool! Fool! Threefold fool!" whispered Little Master into Sintram's ear; but at that moment the voice of old Rolf was heard full and clear up in the castle, singing his matin chant—

> "God honoureth him
> Whose heart is grim
> Unto the earth's enticing,
> Invisibly
> Ascendeth he
> Into the ranks of angels!"

Then a holy peace was born in Sintram's heart, and he looked up with more of hope than even in that hour when Gabriele gave him sword and scarf, and Folko the name of knight.

WITH a favouring spring wind Folko and Gabriele had set sail, and were now upon the wide sea, the coast of Normandy already dimly outlined before them over the waves. But Biorn of the Fiery Eyes still sat dark and speechless in his castle.

He bade them no farewell. There was more of fear and of defiance than of reverence in his soul for Montfaucon, especially since the matter of the boar's head; and bitterly the thought gnawed his proud heart that the great baron, the flower and pride of the whole race, had come in peace to visit him, but had left him in displeasure, and with harsh and stern reproach. He kept ever before him the memory of all that had happened, and the thought of how different it all might have been;

he imagined what songs would be sung in the after-world of this visit of the great Folko to their shores, and of the worthlessness of the savage Biorn. At last, full of raging anger, he tore the bands of his troubled spirit, broke forth with all his warriors from the castle, and set out upon the most fearful and unrighteous war that he had ever engaged in. Sintram heard his father's wild war-horn, left the Steinburg to the care of Rolf, and rushed forth in arms.

But the flames of cottages and farms among the mountains rose up before him, and showed him what sort of war it was that his father waged; and although he kept on his way to the scene it was only to offer his mediation, and to protest that he would lay no hand upon his noble sword in any such detestable fight, even though Steinburg should fall under the enemy's revenge, and his father's castle as well. Biorn, in mad fury, threw the spear that he held in his hand at his son; the weapon hissed past him. Sintram remained with open visor, and said, "My father, do your will; in this godless onset will I not join."

Biorn laughed scornfully. "It seems I am for ever to have a spy here; my son follows upon the fine Frankish knight." But he bethought himself notwithstanding, and accepted Sintram's mediation, atoned for the harm he had done, and

retired sullenly to his castle, while Sintram went up again to the Rocks of the Moon.

But such deeds now frequently occurred, — and though it came to pass that Sintram was the protector of all those whom his father in his bursts of fury pursued, still at times his own wildness tempted the young knight forth with his father, hand in hand. Then Biorn, full of ghastly delight, would laugh. "Son, look how our torches light up their homes, how their blood spurts to our swords! Whatever you try and make of yourself, I can see that you are, and ever will be, my own true heir."

After such yielding to evil, Sintram knew no other solace than to fly to the Chaplain of the Castle of Drontheim, and, confessing his sin and misery, receive absolution after due repentance and penance done. But ofttimes when he raised up the broken-hearted youth, the good man would say, "Oh, how nearly hadst thou withstood thy last trial, how victorious mightst thou have looked into Verena's face, and all been atoned for. Now thou hast thrown thyself back for years. Think only, my son, how the life of man passes away, and if thou forever thus slidest backward, how wilt thou ever reach the summit?"

Years went and years came, and Biorn's head was snow-white, and the youth Sintram was no

longer young. The aged Rolf could scarcely ever leave the Steinburg, and he sometimes said, "That I still live is to me indeed a burden, but also in a measure the highest consolation, for I believe my loving God has spared me for a great and crowning joy. And that must concern you, dear lord Sintram, for in what else save you could be my delight in this world?"

But all had long remained the same, and Sintram's dreams at Christmastide grew, if anything, yearly more horrible.

Again the holy time drew near, and the troubled knight looked forward with more distress than ever before. Sometimes, as he measured the nights that intervened, a cold sweat stood on his forehead, and he said, "This time, my dear old Rolf, believe me, something fearfully decisive is before me."

One evening an urgent anxiety about his father suddenly overwhelmed him; it seemed to him that some fearful peril was present in the family castle, and it was in vain that Rolf reminded him how the snow lay its deepest in the valleys,—that his terrible dreams might befall him in the night, all alone upon the mountains.

"It cannot be worse than if I stay here," was all Sintram's answer; and he drew his horse from the stable, and set forth out into the gathering darkness.

The noble steed ever slid and stumbled and fell

in the pathless ways, and ever the knight raised him again and drove him only with the more haste and dread towards his longed-for, though deeply feared, goal. Nevertheless he would scarcely have reached it had not his faithful hound followed upon his steps and sought his master, astray from the lost and hidden track, and lured him with joyful barking, and warned him by his whining of the pitfalls and deceitful reaches of ice beneath the snow. So at last, towards midnight, they drew up to the castle. The hall windows were aglow with brilliant light, as if a great festival were being given there; a dull hollow roar of song came through the window-panes. Sintram hastily gave his horse in charge, and flew up the stairway, Skovmark staying below near the well-cared-for steed.

"God be praised, dear knight Sintram, that you have come," said a goodly esquire, coming to meet him. "There is nothing good brewing in there. But take heed to yourself and let nothing befool you. Your father has, it seems to me, the most hateful of guests."

With a shudder Sintram opened the door. There sat a little man opposite in miner's dress. The armour had for some time past been arranged again in its old place around the stone table, so that only two places had been left free; and in the one facing the door sat lord Biorn of the Fiery

Eyes, his face so lighted up by the flaring candles that he looked indeed all that the name implied.

"Father, who is it that you have with you?" cried Sintram; and the guess which he made changed to a certainty as the miner turned, and Little Master's horrible face laughed under his dark hood.

"Well, my lord son!" cried the now altogether savage Biorn, "you have not been here this long time; and to-night this jolly comrade is here, so that your place is taken up. But throw one of those old bits of armour aside, and push a seat in its place, and drink with us and be merry with us."

"Yes, do so, lord knight Sintram," laughed Little Master. "What would come of it but that the armour might rattle something strangely when it fell, or that the guest it belongs to might look over your shoulder. But he would not drink up our wine; for the ghosts let that alone. So up with you!"

Biorn joined loudly in the stranger's hideous laughter, and while Sintram was trying to collect his whole strength that he might not go mad at this wild scene, the old knight said, "Why do you gaze at him so? Do you think you are looking into a a mirror? Now that you two are together I do not find the likeness so great, but before it seemed to me that you were enough alike to be mistaken for each other."

"God forbid!" said Sintram, going nearer to the hateful apparition. "I command thee, accursed stranger, to depart from this castle, by virtue of my power as my father's heir, as consecrated knight, and spirit."

Biorn seemed about to oppose with all his fury; Little Master murmured in a low voice, "Thou art not master in this house, pious knight; on this hearth hast thou never kindled fire."

Then Sintram drew the blade of Gabriele's sword, held the cross of the hilt before the eyes of the evil guest, and said quickly, in a strong voice, "Die, or flee!"

And he fled, the hideous Little Master, and with such haste that no one knew whether through door or window. But some of the armour was thrown down in his flight, the candles went out, and from the bluish gleam that filled the hall with dim incomprehensible light, it almost seemed, as the stranger had said, that the spirits of those who had worn the armour were in their presence.

Both father and son were terrified, but each chose his own way of safety. So strongly was it the wish of Biorn that his terrible guest should appear again, that Little Master's step was heard on the stairway, and his brown skinny hand even stirred the door-fastening.

"Now indeed are we lost," said Sintram in his

soul. "We are lost to all eternity if he comes back;" and he fell upon his knees and prayed straight from his agonised heart to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the fiend left the door again.

Again did Biorn call him back, and again Sintram's prayer restrained him. So went on this fearful strife of spirit the long night through, while howling whirlwinds raged about the castle, so that all the household thought the end of time had come.

At length the dawn glimmered through the hall windows, the storm-fury died away, and Biorn fell back, powerless, in slumber upon his seat. Peace and hope filled the souls of the castle's inmates, and Sintram went forth pale and exhausted into the dewy air of the mild winter morning.

The faithful Skovmark had fondly followed his master, and now lay at his feet, watchful and alert; Sintram himself sat half-sleeping on a seat in the stone wall. Suddenly the hound pricked up his ears, his clear eyes looked intently forth, and he sprang with joyful bounds down the mountain. Soon the chaplain of the Castle of Drontheim emerged from amid the rocks, and the good animal ran back to the knight to announce the welcome guest.

Sintram opened his eyes like a child whose Christmas gifts had been placed before his couch, and the chaplain smiled upon him as he had never

smiled before. There was victory and blessing in his glance, or most gracious approach thereto.

"Yesterday you did much, much indeed," he said, with the spirit of prayer upon his face. "My heroic knight, I praise God for thee. Verena knows it all, and is earnestly grateful. Yes, I dare to hope now that the time is near at hand when thou mayst appear before her. But Sintram, knight Sintram, there is also sore haste! For the old man above needs speedy help; and a heavy trial, —I hope the very last,—but a heavy trial indeed thou hast yet to undergo. Arm thyself, my warrior, arm thyself also with outward weapons; for though inward and spiritual ones alone are needed, yet it is true that to the warrior, as to the priest, is befitting in decisive moments the whole solemn garb of his calling. If it seems well to you, we will go at once to Drontheim, and together. To-night thou must return, for that is part of the hidden counsel that is revealed to Verena's insight. Also there is here so much of wild strife, and thou hast sore need to-day of still, self-collecting rest."

Sintram bowed with cheerful humility, and called for his horse, and also for armour. "Only," he added, "let none of the armour be brought that lay last night thrown down in the hall."

All was done quickly according to his order.

The armour adorned with fine graven work, the helmet so simple that it seemed more befitting squire than knight, the giant lance which belonged to the armour,—all these things which were brought them the chaplain regarded with thoughtful and melancholy tenderness. At last when Sintram with the help of one of his men, was fully equipped, the priest spoke—

"See, my dear lord, the strange ordinance of Heaven! This armour once belonged to Weigand the Slender, and with this spear has he taken part in many great deeds. When your mother tended him in the castle, and your father was still kindly disposed towards him, he begged as a favour that his coat of mail might be hung in the hall of Biorn. He himself, as you know, thought to build a cloister in which he was to live as monk; and to this he added the helmet he had worn in the days before his knighthood, when he first saw Verena's face, rather than the one which belonged to the armour. How fitting it seems that for this decisive hour it chanced that it is this armour, and no other, that has been brought you. As far as my dim human vision goes, it seems to me a serious but glorious token, full of promise."

As Sintram stood in full armour, serious and noble, he might from his figure have been taken for a youthful knight, had not a grief-furrowed

countenance, old before its time, looked forth from his helmet.

"Who has bound those leaves about my horse's head?" Sintram, not well pleased, asked of the esquire; "I am not a victor, nor am I a wedding guest; and they are only dry red and yellow leaves, dull and dead as the time itself."

"I do not know, my lord," answered a warrior, "but it seemed to me well that it should be so."

"Let it be," said the chaplain. "It seems also to me a sign full of meaning from the highest source."

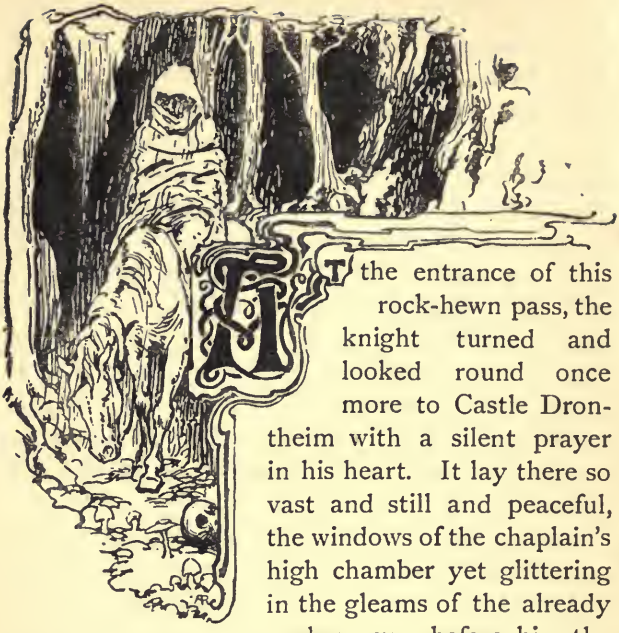
Then the knight swung himself upon the saddle, and with the priest by his side they both went slowly and silently on their way towards Drontheim, the faithful hound at their heels. When the high castle came in sight a gentle smile lit up Sintram's countenance, as sunshine a wintry valley. "God does great things for me," he said. "Once as a wild headstrong boy I rushed from this place. Now, a penitent man, I come back; I hope there may yet good come out of this poor vexed life of mine."

The chaplain bowed his head in mute kindly assent, and soon thereafter the travellers passed through the high resounding gateway into the castle court. At the priest's signal the warriors came reverently to take the horse in charge, and

he and Sintram went by many winding and confused passages and stairways to the little far-off room which the chaplain had chosen for his own, far from the turmoil of men, and near to the clouds and the stars. There they spent a quiet day, with deep prayer in their hearts, and in earnest reading together of the Holy Scripture.

At evenfall the chaplain rose, and said, "Now then, my knight, gird thy horse, and mount, and ride to thy father's castle. A toilsome path lies before thee, and I dare not go with thee. But to cry unto the Lord for thee, that I can, and that I will the whole fearful night through, O thou most dear child of the Highest, that thou be not lost."

Under the shadow of grim forebodings, but nevertheless strong and glad of heart, Sintram obeyed the holy man. The sun was setting as he drew near to a long valley strangely shut in by rocks, through which his way ran.



At the entrance of this rock-hewn pass, the knight turned and looked round once more to Castle Drontheim with a silent prayer in his heart. It lay there so vast and still and peaceful, the windows of the chaplain's high chamber yet glittering in the gleams of the already sunken sun; before him the dark valley yawned as a grave.

Then he perceived that someone was coming towards him riding on a small horse, and Skovmark, who had gone up to meet the stranger, ran back trembling and whining with great fear, and crept under his master's horse.

But this noble beast also seemed to forget his bold battle-proved courage, and quivered in every muscle; and as the knight strove to urge him

towards the stranger he reared, snorting and plunging, and began to shrink backwards. Only through Sintram's great strength and skill was he at last curbed, and, white with foam, made to approach the unknown traveller.

"You have cowardly beasts with you," he said in a low smothered voice.

Sintram could not in the growing darkness distinguish aright what sort of being was before him, only a very pale face, as white as new-fallen snow, gleamed out of a long loose garment. He carried what seemed to be a box under his arm, his small horse at every step drooped its head to the ground, as if tired out, causing a doleful sound from the bells which on a dilapidated bridle hung from his neck.

After a short pause Sintram answered, "Noble steeds have a distaste for less noble ones, and the bravest dog has a secret dread of forms unusual. I have no cowardly beasts with me."

"Good, sir knight! Then ride down the valley with me."

"I shall ride down the valley, but I need no companion."

"Perhaps I shall want one though. Do you not see that I am unarmed? Here at this time, at this hour, there are frightful enchanted creatures abroad."

As if to confirm these words a Thing swung itself round toward them from the nearest frost-laden tree, whether snake or great lizard one knew not, for it seemed both; it curled and twisted itself, and seemed about to descend upon them. Sintram struck and transfixed it with his spear, where it stuck firmly in horrid convulsions upon the point. He strove to shake it off against trees and rock edges in vain, so he rested the spear upon his right shoulder, the hideous creature still writhing upon it, but at least out of sight. Then with placid courage he turned to the stranger.

"It seems, though, as if I might help you, and as an unknown comrade is not strictly forbidden me, on with you then, and let us go through the valley."

"Help?" came back the dark answer; "not help, though perhaps *I* can help *thee*. And God's mercy on thee if there should a time come when I could not help thee. Then wert thou lost indeed, and I should become frightful to thee. Let us go on through the valley—I have thy knightly word for it. Come!"

They rode onward, Sintram's horse still ever shrinking back, the faithful hound ever whining, but both silently and firmly obeying the will of their master.

The snow had fallen from the smooth rock walls,

and by the rising moon one could see strange grimacing things upon their steep sides, as of snakes with the faces of men: they were only curious rock veins amidst bare roots of trees whose strange twisted forms were firmly fixed in the solid stone. Strange and high Drontheim Castle peered yet once more through a rocky chasm, as if in a parting farewell.

Then the knight gazed keenly at his companion, and it seemed to him almost as though the form that rode near him was that of Weigand the Slender.

"In God's name," he said, "is it possible that thou art the shade of that departed hero who suffered and died for Verena's sake?"

"I did not suffer, I did not die; but you suffer and you die, you poor people! I am not Weigand. I am that other one that was so like him, the one whom you too have once met in the forest."

Sintram wished that he could free himself from the terror which these words gave him. He looked at his horse, it seemed to him to be in some way changed. Like sacrificial flames the dry oak leaves rustled round its head in the light of the moon. He looked down at his friendly Skovmark, he too was curiously altered by fear. On the ground lay dead men's bones in the middle of the way, and hideous lizards darted about, and great

poison toadstools had crept out despite the frosty ground.

"Is this then still my own horse that I am riding upon?" he asked softly; "and is that trembling thing which runs at my side my dog?"

Then someone behind him cried out in a yelling voice: "Halt! Halt! and take me with you!"

Looking back, Sintram saw a hideous little horned beast, half boar, half bear as to his head, stalking along upon the hind-legs of a horse, a sinister-looking hook or sickle in his hand.

It was the Being of his terrible dreams, and, ah! it was at the same time that most hateful Little Master who with a burst of wild laughter stretched out a long claw towards the knight.

In despair Sintram murmured, "Then I have fallen asleep, and my dreams are coming upon me."

"Thou art awake," the rider at his side answered. "But me too thou knowest in thy dreams, for behold I am Death."

And his robe fell from him, and there came to light a mouldering corpse as of one long dead, with a wreath of snakes upon the ghastly face. The box which he had held under his cloak was an hour-glass with sands almost run. Death held it

with his withered hand towards the knight. The sound of the bell upon the horse's neck was the tolling of a passing bell.

"Lord, into Thy hand I commend my spirit," Sintram prayed; and full of earnest devotion he followed the beckoning Death.

"He has thee not yet! not yet! not yet!" screamed the foul fiend behind him. "Come rather to me! In a moment,—for as swift as thy thoughts, so swift is my power,—in a moment thou art in Normandy. Still Helen blooms in beauty there for thee, in the beauty with which she left thee." And again he began his unholy praises of Gabriele, and Sintram's heart beat wildly in his weakened breast.

Death said no more, but raised his hour-glass higher and higher; and as the sands ran more swiftly, there streamed a soft light from the glass that seemed to Sintram the still shining of eternity before him; behind him were the hideous demon claws snatching him back into the wild mazes of the world.

"I command thee, accursed Form that followest me," he cried,—"I command thee, in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, that thou cease thy enticements, and that thou call thyself by the word that is thy name in the Holy Writ!"

A name, most fearsome of all names, burst like

a thunder-clap from the Tempter in his despair, and forthwith he vanished.

"He will never come again," said Death in kindly tone.

"So have I then become wholly thine, my stern companion?"

"Not yet, my Sintram. Not for many many years will I come to thee. But forget me not meanwhile."

"Fast will I hold thee in my soul, thou fearful warner from evil,—thou awful and yet loving guide."

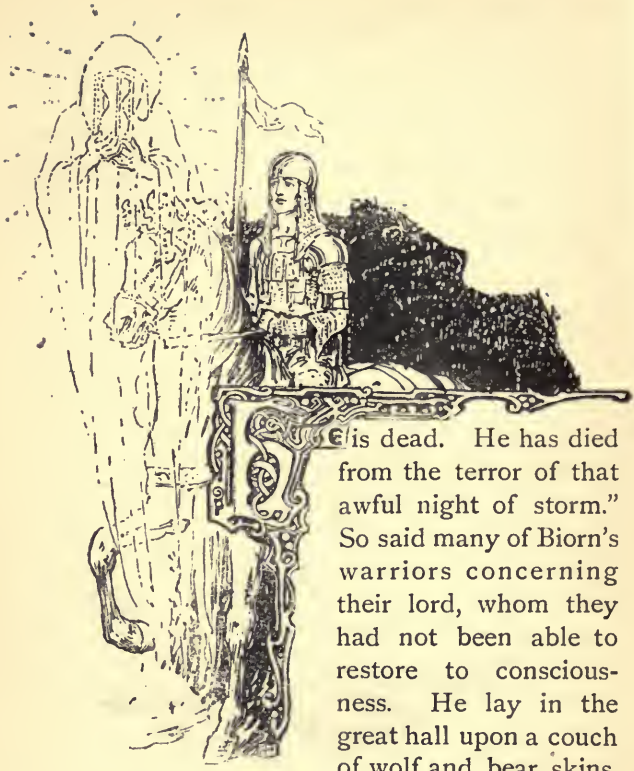
"Oh, I can also be very gentle."

And he proved that this was so even then,—ever more softly gleamed his figure in the increasing light which shone from the hour-glass; his features, no longer ghastly, wore a gentle smile, the crown of serpents became a bright wreath of palm leaves; the horse seemed to change into a white cloud in the moonlight, and the bells made sweet music.

These words seemed in the melody to fall upon Sintram's ears—

"Gone the World, the Flesh, the Devil!
Gleams the ever-shining light!
Hero, who hast conquered evil,
Think of him who, lost in error,
Old and dying, sees with terror
Me confront his failing sight."

The knight knew well that these words concerned his father, and he hastened onward the noble steed, who now obeyed him gladly; the faithful hound again ran trustfully by his side. Death had vanished and left behind him a bright cloud as of morning, that was still shining before Sintram even when the risen sun shone in the clear winter heaven.



is dead. He has died from the terror of that awful night of storm." So said many of Biorn's warriors concerning their lord, whom they had not been able to restore to consciousness. He lay in the great hall upon a couch of wolf and bear skins, in the midst of the fallen armour.

"God have mercy upon thee, thou poor wild soul!" sighed one of the vassals.

Then the warder blew from the tower, and one

of the warriors came into the hall, saying, with an air of awe—

"There is a knight drawing near us—a knight of wondrous presence. I might have taken him for our lord Sintram, but that there floats before him a bright morning cloud which casts such light upon him that it seems as though he were decked in red flowers. And his horse has a wreath of waving red about his head, such as it would not be the will of our dead lord's son to suffer."

"Such a wreath did I weave yesterday," another said. "Lord Sintram was indeed but ill pleased at first, only he let it be so."

"Why didst thou thus?"

"It seemed as though something sang constantly in my ears—

> "'Victory! victory!
> Unto great victory,
> Rideth our knight! Unto victory forth!'

and there was a branch of our oldest oak tree that had still chanced to keep under the snow all its red and yellow leaves. So I did according as it was said unto me; and stripped them to make a crown of triumph for the noble steed. And Skovmark himself sprang joyfully about as though to thank me. Such noble animals comprehend

many things. You know he was ever afraid of lord Biorn."

They heard the clang of Sintram's spurs on the stone floor, and the glad barking of Skovmark.

Then Biorn, whom they had supposed dead, rose upon his couch and rolled his eyes slowly about him, and asked the affrighted warriors, "Who is it that is coming, you men? Who is it that comes? I know it is my son, but who comes with him? Life or death hangs on the answer. For you see, dear people, although Gotthard and Rudleib have prayed much for me, yet if Little Master comes I am lost in spite of all!"

"Thou art not lost, dear father!" came Sintram's loving voice through the gently opened door, and the shimmer of the morning cloud was upon him, as he entered.

Biorn folded his hands and looked thankfully up to heaven. "Yes, ah yes, God be praised, it is indeed the right companion! It is kindly, beautiful Death," he said, and made a sign to his son. "Come, my deliverer! Come, thou beloved of the Lord, that I may tell thee all that has befallen me."

Sintram sat now close to his father's couch, and all in the room were aware of a marvellous change. The old Biorn, once so red and fierce of aspect, was now almost white as marble, while the erstwhile

pallid face of Sintram glowed with clear rosy hue. That was because there still gleamed upon him the morning cloud of the new day, a presence indeed hardly to be seen, but touching every soul present with its marvellous power.

"My son," the old man began in gentle and serious tone, "I have lain long in a deathlike slumber, and have known nothing outward; within, ah, within my spirit I have known but too much. I thought my soul would perish with an eternal agony; and, still more horrible, that my soul was eternal even as the agony. Dear child, thy cheek grows pale at my words; I will refrain, and tell thee of better things. For also, far away from here, I saw a high and noble church, where Gotthard and Rudleib knelt in prayer for me. Gotthard had become very old; he was as our snow mountains in the beautiful evening hours lit by the setting sun. And Rudleib was also much changed, but still fresh and powerful; and both with all the might of their souls did call upon God for me, their enemy. But a voice as of an angel said, 'It is his son who has done most for him though. This night he must fight with Death and with the fallen angels. His victory is victory, his downfall is downfall for the old man as for himself.' Upon this I awoke, and I knew that all depended upon whom thou bringest with thee.

Thou hast conquered, and, next to God, the glory is thine."

"Gotthard and his son have done much also," Sintram answered; "and, ah, dear father, let us not forget the chaplain's lifelong ardent prayers. In the strife with temptation and deadly fear, I felt how much the faith of holy men can aid."

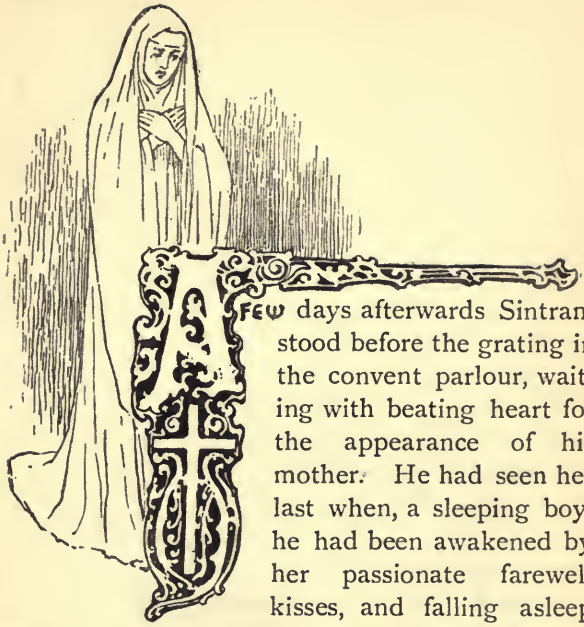
"I gladly believe it, my noble son, as all that thou sayst to me," the old man replied; and at that moment the chaplain himself entered, and Biorn stretched out his hand with a smile of happiness and peace.

Then came for all of them a fair dawn of unity and holy rest. "And see," said Biorn, "how Skovmark now springs upon me. Not long since he howled with fear when he saw me."

"My dear lord," said the chaplain, "there is in good animals truly a spirit of God, though they be only half conscious of it, and are as in a dream."

Little by little it became still in the great hall. The last moments of the old knight were drawing near, but his soul was full of light and joy. Sintram and the chaplain watched by his couch in prayer, and his warriors knelt reverently about him. "Is that the sound of bells in Verena's cloister?" said the dying man at last. And Sintram nodded that it was even so, but his hot

tears fell fast upon the changing face of his father. There was a gleam in the old man's eyes the morning cloud drew close above him, and then gleam and morning cloud and life itself had vanished from the dead.



FEW days afterwards Sintram stood before the grating in the convent parlour, waiting with beating heart for the appearance of his mother. He had seen her last when, a sleeping boy, he had been awakened by her passionate farewell kisses, and falling asleep again he had wondered what his mother would have had of him. In vain had he sought her next morning in castle and garden.

The chaplain was now at his side, and had his joy in the rapturous, even if sorrowful, face of the now gentle knight, upon whom there still rested a light reflection of that morning cloud.

The inner door was opened. With a heavenly

smile, white veiled, pure and high and stately, Verena entered her son's presence. Here could be no passionate outcry either of joy or woe; no desire for word or sign. The holy peace which rested upon these walls must have fallen with power upon a heart less tried by fire, less purified, than Sintram's. With silent tears knelt the son before the mother, and kissed the hem of her garment, and was as a disembodied soul in paradise, with all earthly care and longing hushed in infinite peace.

"Dearest mother," he said, "let me become a holy man even as thou art a holy woman. I will enter the cloister yonder, and perhaps the time may come wherein I should be found worthy to be thy confessor, if our good chaplain through his age or weakness should be no longer able to leave the castle Drontheim."

"That were indeed a beautiful life of still and peaceful happiness, dear child," she answered; "but that is not thy calling. A mighty and valiant knight shalt thou remain, and the long life which is nearly always given to us children of the North must be spent otherwise for God, to protect the weak, to combat the boldness of evil, and to fulfil a high and noble destiny beyond my knowledge now."

"God's will be done," said the knight, ris-

ing before her, full of earnest devotion and courage.

"Ah, dear son, what calm and noble joy will come for us," Verena answered. "Already is our longing desire for meeting now fulfilled, and never again shalt thou be estranged from me in the far distance. Week by week, on this day, shalt thou come back to me here, and shalt recount to me all thy knightly deeds, and receive my counsel and my blessing."

"So at last have I become thy good and happy child!" cried Sintram in the joy of his heart. "Only that the all-loving God has given me thereto the power of manhood in soul and body. Ah, how beyond all men blessed is a son to whom it is given to rejoice his dearly loved mother with the blossom and fruit of his life."

And so, glad at heart, with manifold blessing he left the cloister's still enclosure, and entered once again his noble path of life in the world. It was not enough that he should go forth on every side to help the cause of right and justice and to war with wrong, to every stranger stood his friendly castle gates open for protection and the welcome of cheerful hospitality; and the aged Rolf, almost grown young again in the new-born life of his beloved knight, was installed a seneschal. Then

came a beautiful beneficent winter of Sintram's days. Only there were times when he sighed in the depth of his heart, "Ah, Montfaucon! ah, Gabriele! If I could only know you have forgiven me!"

The sweet spring had dawned bright over the dark northern lands on a morning when Sintram rode homeward after a victorious conflict with one of the enemies of his country's peace. Singing, his warriors followed him.

As they all drew near the gates, the joyous notes of the castle horn sounded far and wide. "It must be that some thrice welcome visitor is approaching," said the knight, and he spurred his horse to a quicker pace across the dewy meadows.

Already from afar he could see that the old Rolf was busily arranging under the trees inside the gateway a table for the morning meal. From all the battlements and towers waved flags and banners in the fresh spring air; the squires were runing to and fro in holiday array. As the good Rolf perceived his master drawing near, he clapped his

hands joyfully over his grey head and hastened into the castle. Presently as Sintram arrived before the great gates they opened solemnly, and Rolf came forth with tears in his eyes, presenting the three noble figures which accompanied him.

Two of them were men of lofty stature, both old and strangely like each other, only that one of them was by far the elder. They were clad in the black velvet of noble German citizens, with golden chains and medals on neck and breast. Between them walked a young boy of wondrous beauty in a page's dress of cerulean velvet, gold embroidered.

Sintram had never before seen his distinguished guests, and nevertheless they seemed to him dear and long-trusted friends. The aged man recalled to him his father's words about the snow mountains lit by the evening sun. Then he knew that this must be indeed Gotthard, and that the younger and stronger man by his side was Rudlieb. But the youth between them, — ah, Sintram in his humility hardly dared to hope who it might be that in his soft and noble features recalled to mind the two most deeply revered of all beings.

Then the aged Gotthard Lenz, king of old men, advanced with noble step, and said: "This is the noble boy Engeltram of Montfaucon, only son of the great lord of Montfaucon; and his father and

mother send him to thee, lord Sintram, well knowing of thy godly and most glorious knighthood, that thou mayst bring him up in all the honour and power of these northern lands, and mayst make of him a Christian hero as thou thyself art."

Sintram sprang from his horse, Engeltram of Montfaucon gracefully holding the stirrup, and gently checking the retainers with the words, "I am the noblest born page of this great knight, and the service about his person belongs to me."

Sintram knelt upon the turf in silent prayer, then standing in the light of the morning sun, he held in his arms the image of Folko and Gabriele. "With the help of God, my Engeltram," he cried, "shalt thou be as that clear shining sun, and thy life-course be like his!"

"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," cried Rolf, and he wept for joy.

And with Sintram's warm welcome to Gotthard and Rudlieb, the chaplain of the Castle of Drontheim drew near. He had just left Verena's cloister, bringing a joyful morning greeting to her son, and stretching out his hands he invoked the blessing of God on all.

PRINTED BY
MORRISON AND GIBB LIMITED
EDINBURGH

SOME OTHER BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

FREEMANTLE & CO., 217 PICCADILLY

LONDON, W.

The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm.

A new Translation by Mrs. EDGAR LUCAS. Illustrated with 100 Drawings by ARTHUR RACKHAM. With Frontispiece, Title-page, and Cover Design lithographed in Colours. Cloth, large square 8vo, 6s. net.

Tales from Shakespeare.

By CHARLES and MARY LAMB. In One Volume, large crown 8vo. With Photogravure Frontispiece, Coloured Title-page, Cover Design, and Fourteen Full-page Illustrations by ROBERT ANNING BELL. Introduction by Mr. ANDREW LANG. Cloth gilt, gilt top, 5s. net. 100 Copies only will be bound in Vellum with Mr. ANNING BELL's Designs stamped in gold. Price on application.

FIVE CHARMING PLAYS FOR CHILDREN.

My Little Mummers.

Christmas Plays for other Children. By GEORGINA MEINERTZHAGEN. With Cover Design by Miss A. RICHARDS. Foolscap 8vo, 1s. net.

A Book of Child Verse.

Being Poems Grave and Gay. By Father JOHN B. TABB. Large square 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.